

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[1:09 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll officially declare the meeting open and extend on behalf of members of the select committee on boundaries a very warm welcome to all of you who have found time to come out and be with us today. You'll be pleased to note that this is the best attended meeting thus far. So hats off to Medicine Hat and southeastern Alberta for coming out in the numbers you are.

In a few moments we're going to go through a slide presentation to give you some background material, but before doing that, I want to introduce the members of the committee, and we'll go around the room and ask each of you to introduce yourselves if you would. For the actual presentation of briefs, we'd ask you to come forward to the table. The process we'll follow at that time: members of the committee may have a question they wish to ask. It's not an interrogation; it's merely questions for clarification or to get you to further develop your point or idea. It's been our practice in the past to then throw it open to all those present so that if you have a question or comment, you may also piggyback at that point in time.

As this is a select special committee of the Assembly, all of our proceedings are recorded and there is an official *Hansard* kept which will be made available to each and every one of you if you wish to have it. We don't want you to be intimidated by the microphones. They have to be here because it is a select special committee, but we try very hard to keep our meetings as informal and friendly as possible.

I'm now going to introduce the members of our team who are present. We do have six of the seven members of the committee with us today. Unfortunately, Mike Cardinal, the Conservative MLA from Athabasca-Lac La Biche, is not with us. Starting on my far left, Pat Black. Pat is the member for Calgary-Foothills. She was first elected this spring. She's a Conservative member of the Assembly. Between Pat and myself, Tom Sigurdson. Tom is a New Democratic member of the Assembly, first elected in 1986, re-elected this year. At the far end of the table, Frank Bruseker. Frank represents the constituency of Calgary-North West, is a Liberal member of the Assembly, first elected this spring. Stockwell Day from Red Deer-North. Stock serves as the Whip for the government caucus. He was first elected in 1986, re-elected this spring. On my immediate right - certainly not in philosophical terms, but in terms of where we're seated - Pam Barrett. Pam is the House leader of the New Democratic Party. She represents the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands and serves on our committee. And I'm Bob Bogle from Taber-Warner. Also with us today is Bob Pritchard, who's the senior administrator for the team, and Robin Wortman at the back. I'm going to pause for a moment now, and if we could just go around the room and possibly start over here, if you'd just give us your name and where you're from, please.

MR. JAMES: Greg James, with CHAT Radio and TV.

MR. HAYS: I'm Peter Hays, *Medicine Hat News*.

MR. VAN PEENEN: Paul Van Peenen, *Medicine Hat News*.

MRS. GRIFFIN: Cathy Griffin from Bow Valley.

MRS. PAHL: Joanne Pahl from Bow Valley.

MR. GODIN: Larry Godin, city clerk, city of Medicine Hat.

MR. GRIMM: Ted Grimm, Medicine Hat.

MS NELIS: Dominique Nelis, *Cypress Courier*.

MR. PAHL: Laray Pahl, MD councillor.

MR. J. HERMAN: Jim Herman, *Cypress-Redcliff*.

MR. ANDERSON: Lyle Anderson, *Cypress-Redcliff*.

MRS. SMITH: Cathy Smith, citizen.

MR. SMITH: Dan Smith, Medicine Hat.

MR. T. HERMAN: Ted Herman, Medicine Hat.

MR. REGEHR: Wally Regehr, from Medicine Hat.

MRS. VAN ENK: Barb Van Enk, Medicine Hat.

MR. ROTH: Jim Roth, Bow Island.

MR. MELLEN: Fred Mellen, Bow Island.

MR. WIDMER: Ben Widmer, Seven Persons.

MR. NICOLL: Gordon Nicoll, Foremost.

MRS. OLSEN: Elizabeth Olsen, Bow Island.

MR. GRAUMANS: Ken Graumans, Seven Persons.

MR. EDLUND: Paul Edlund, Bow Island.

MR. TORSHER: Ed Torsher, county of Forty Mile.

MR. FABIAN: Vincent Fabian, Tilley, county of Newell.

MR. DILLENBECK: Bryan Dillenbeck, Foremost.

MR. VAN TRYP: Paul Van Tryp, Burdett.

MR. CARTER: David Carter, Medicine Hat.

MR. MUELLER: Hans Mueller, Medicine Hat.

MR. BERGDAHL: Bud Bergdahl, Redcliff.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Again, if you wish a coffee or a glass of juice during the proceedings, please feel free to get up and help yourself.

I think we should get right into the briefs because there are a number. We'll start with Mr. Anderson's brief, and if you'd like to join us . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Shouldn't we do the slides first?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry; I forgot about our slide presentation. I'm getting ahead of myself.

I'll give you a short background and then . . . Whose turn is it to take us through the slides? Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You did it last night.

The reason our committee was struck is because of a court case in British Columbia. In British Columbia a professor from UBC named Mr. Dixon took the British Columbia government to court alleging that the boundaries in that province were unfair and violated the first section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The case was heard by then Chief Justice McLachlin of the B.C. court. Justice McLachlin found in favour of Professor Dixon and ruled that the province's boundaries were indeed in violation of the Charter and that there should not be more than a plus or minus 25 percent variance on average population for the province as a whole. Professor Dixon further took the government to court, arguing that the boundaries had to be changed immediately. In a subsequent decision by Justice Meredith, while Justice Meredith agreed with the findings of McLachlin, he indicated that it was not proper for the courts to order a government to change its boundaries overnight, that the government needed to be given time to do that.

While that court case does not have a direct bearing on Alberta or any other jurisdiction in Canada, it certainly does have an impact on us because of the precedent system we follow under British parliamentary law. We, along with other provinces, have been addressing our own Acts to see how they conform or where they would be in violation of that ruling.

It's interesting to note that Justice McLachlin, following her decision, was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. She's now one of the nine members of the highest court in the land. So even though the case was not appealed by the B.C. court, you can be sure that any case that did find its way to the Supreme Court would in all likelihood be dealt with by the same judge who dealt with the original B.C. case.

Our own statutes require that we go through a general redistribution in Alberta after every second general election. We had our last redistribution process in 1983-84. We had a general election, as you know, in 1986 and again this spring, 1989. Had the court cases not emerged in British Columbia, chances are that our Assembly this spring would have created an Electoral Boundaries Commission and they would be out there doing their work right now so that they could issue an interim report, hold public hearings, and then a final report to the Legislature so we could make some refinements or adjustments to our own legislation. Because of the case in British Columbia, the three political parties in Alberta felt it prudent to establish an all-party committee to examine very carefully the ramifications of the B.C. court case, to receive input from Albertans so that we know exactly what we're doing and how we're going to do it.

We've received in the hearings to date a lot of advice, some of it quite contradictory. We've received suggestions that we reduce our Assembly from the present 83 down to 70. The presenter of that particular brief suggested that . . . I think there was one rural riding that was not affected by it, Stony Plain. In every other case there would be a merger of two and sometimes three rural constituencies to create one new constituency. In our case here, I remember that the suggestion was to merge Cypress-Redcliff and Taber-Warner. I can't recall offhand Bow Valley's situation, but it would probably merge with Little Bow. I don't remember offhand.

The purpose of our committee is to get out and solicit input and advice from Albertans. I'm going to ask Frank to lead us through the slides, and then we'll deal with any questions you have on either the mandate of our committee or the process we are following.

MR. BRUSEKER: The overhead material is basically the same information you've seen in this package. The first page which is up is a list of all of the 83 constituencies around the province of Alberta. They're simply listed alphabetically.

You'll notice that some of the constituencies have a small asterisk beside their name. The reason for the asterisk is to indicate those constituencies which fall outside the plus or minus 25 percent rule, if I can refer to it as that. There is a total of 43 constituencies that have an asterisk beside their name.

This next slide is similar to the next page. It's entitled Eligible Voters once again. This list differs from the other one only in that they are sorted according to eligible voter size rather than alphabetically, the largest constituency being Edmonton-Whitemud and then sorted down to the smallest, with Cardston being listed at 8,100. Just a footnote with Cardston: you'll notice there's a little number one beside it. Cardston has in the geographic bounds of that constituency a reservation of the Blood Indians. Those members chose not to allow the enumerators on the reservation to enumerate the voting-age people in that constituency. So theoretically, therefore, you could add 1,800 members to Cardston. It would still be a small constituency, but that number could vary by 1,800.

Now, if you add up all those numbers of all the eligible voters around the province - I'm not sure if you have this one particular slide like this - you get a total of approximately 1.5 million voters in the province of Alberta. Currently we have 83 constituencies. If you take the 1.5 million voters and divide it by the 83 constituencies, you get an average figure of 18,600 as being an average-size constituency. If we use the 25 percent rule, which is what I referred to just a moment ago, what you get then is a variation. If you add 25 percent of 18,000 onto 18,000, you come up with an upper limit of some 23,000. If you subtract 25 percent of 18,000 from 18,000, then you get a lower limit of about 14,000. So if we were to apply the 25 percent rule, what that means is that all constituencies would have to fall within the range of 14,000 as a low and 23,000 as a high.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's go on to the next one.

MR. BRUSEKER: Now, this next one is that coloured page which you have in your package. You'll notice there are several constituencies that are highlighted in green. Those constituencies are all urban, and they are all constituencies which exceed 23,000 or exceed the 25 percent rule. The ones that are shaded in pink are all rural constituencies, and they are all more than 25 percent below the average. In other words, they are less than 14,000 in population. Putting it on a map, this is all of the pink constituencies, if you will, the constituencies which are less than 14,000 in population.

This is the next page in your package, and it is a map of Alberta. You can see that the ones which are below the 25 percent range right from almost the very northern part of the province to the south and east to west. So there's quite a number of constituencies that are involved here.

This next map is the city of Calgary. These ones are coloured in green. All of those constituencies coloured in green are those urban constituencies which exceed the 25 percent rule. If they're not coloured in green on this map or not coloured in pink on the other map of Alberta that you saw, then they fall within the accepted range of the 25 percent rule.

This next one is the city of Edmonton, again quite a number of green constituencies. One thing I might point out is that generally speaking, the constituencies that are over the 25

percent rule in both Edmonton and Calgary are those constituencies around the periphery; in other words, where the city is expanding and growing outwards.

This next map is the city of Lethbridge, east and west. You will notice it is not coloured. These two constituencies do fall within the plus or minus 25 percent range.

This is the city of Medicine Hat, fourth largest constituency in the province, which, of course, is where we are today. It does exceed the plus 25 percent variation.

The city of Red Deer. This transparency that we have up right now is slightly different from your package in that you'll notice there's a kind of reddish-brown coloured line on there. The reddish-brown coloured line is the city of Red Deer limits. These two constituencies are a little bit unique in the province in that they contain an urban centre but also a piece of rural area around the outside. The reason for this is that in the last redistribution Red Deer was in a similar position to what Medicine Hat is right now. It was too large for one constituency but not quite large enough for two constituencies, so in order to get the population for each of those two constituencies, Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South, up to an acceptable range, a piece of countryside was added to the urban areas. That's why it's a little bit unusual.

This next map I don't believe you have in your package. This is the city of St. Albert. St. Albert also is above the range. It's not quite as far above the range of 23,000 as the city of Medicine Hat, but it does fall above the range.

Now, this next map is again the map of Alberta, coloured in purple this time. The reason for the purple coloration is that the purple indicates those constituencies which are more than 35 percent below the provincial average. In terms of numbers, it means those constituencies which have less than 12,000. The acceptable minimum if we use the 25 percent would be 14,000, so these are substantially below that.

This last map is the last one which you have in your package. There are five constituencies coloured in yellow. Those constituencies are more than 50 percent away from the provincial average, one of them, of course, being Cypress-Redcliff, which surrounds the city of Medicine Hat. In terms of numbers, they're all lower than 10,000 eligible voters per constituency.

Our traveling road show here is going around the province. If you could just back up to the one with the green dots, the green dots indicate where our committee will be traveling. Today is the last day of hearings until the new year. We take a break, and then we will be holding more hearings again in the new year. The next slide shows where and when those dates will be. You can see Medicine Hat is the last section for now. Then we take a break and go back at it again in the winter.

This is one you have in your package. It's the purple shading with the green dots. We put this one in there so that it shows you again which constituencies are below 35 percent and also to show you where we will be traveling with our committee. You'll notice there is quite a similarity between those constituencies that are substantially below in terms of the size and where we are traveling. We came to Medicine Hat because there's quite a concern around the area with respect to population redistribution of constituencies. So we are trying to get into the areas with our committee that are most likely to be affected by what happens.

That's the current situation, and I believe that's the last slide in the section. If there are any questions of any of us, we'd be pleased to take them right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.

Any questions on any of the background information? Are we ready to proceed then? Okay.

While Frank was going through the slides, Pam and I decided that since we've got six chairs at the front and so we don't intimidate anyone, why don't we ask the first six presenters to come forward. If Lyle Anderson, Fred Mellen, Cathy Griffin, Dan Smith, Bryan Dillenbeck, and Vincent Fabian would like to come forward and take a chair, we'll go through these briefs, we'll take a very short break, and then when we reconvene, we'll deal with the next six. If there are some after that, we'll carry on.

Okay, Lyle, if you'd like to go first.

MR. ANDERSON: Hon. members of the committee, as stated in your brief, there are many different options and opinions as to the fairest method of setting electoral boundaries for the province. In regard to establishing a 25 percent ratio to the population versus representation in the Legislature, I think this is good in principle but not the most equitable solution for establishing the electoral boundaries. The present situation for setting boundaries by area, while not being totally fair to the major population areas of Calgary and Edmonton, at least all Albertans receive reasonable access to their Members of the Legislative Assembly.

You might ask what "reasonable access" might be. Certain factors, in my opinion, are necessary to constitute this, the most important of which is time. Time for my member means having time for 33 towns and hamlets, three town and municipal councils, three county boards, five school boards, two police boards, three health boards, three appeal boards, three advisory boards, 15 recreation boards, four parks committees, tourism committees, conservation committees. The list goes on, as you all know. Being members of the Legislature, you deal with them yourselves.

The distances in this area are also quite time consuming. The riding is definitely not the largest in the province, but it is quite spread out and has small areas of population throughout.

The 25 percent option being discussed definitely has its merits and in many ways appears fair. I do, however, find it very hypocritical that a government that has gone to great lengths for Senate reform for representation by area is also going to see about setting up such structured representation by population. In stating this, I would like to also state that a spread in size of population of 3 to 1, with Edmonton-Whitemud at 31,000 to Cardston at 8,100, is also too great a balance for most people to justify. I would like to say that I would establish higher and lower limits to a legislative seat. Numbers I have used for this would be 10,000 for a minimum and 20,000 for a maximum.

Digging up some numbers on Alberta's historical population: the 1971 census figures are 1.627 million represented by 75 seats in the Legislature. That's an average population of 21,700 for each member. The 1986 census figures show 2.365 million represented by 83 seats. That's an average of 28,500 per member in the Legislature. For the House to get back to the 1971 average, you would now have 109 seats. The problem for this committee to try and get around now is the growth in urban population versus rural - nothing anybody can do. Calgary has 18 seats at present with 433,000 voters. That's an average of 24,000 voters per seat. To get to the 20,000 mark you would have to add at least four seats to Calgary. Edmonton likewise has 17 seats, 383,000 voters, an average of 22,000. Edmonton would also have to have at least three seats. Medicine Hat also would end up being split under this.

One thing I would say: being from a rural riding, I would not like to see the rural ridings swallowed up by the municipal. I don't think either one gets a fair shake in the deal in the long run. For Cypress-Redcliff there is a group you will be hearing from today that feels that as they are on the fringe of their riding, Little Bow, going to the 10,000 rural, Little Bow would probably lose a few, and both of them would still be above 10,000 people.

To conclude, I would like to say that the need for boundary change has mostly been brought on by an increase in municipal population. The need for more municipal seats in my opinion is quite obvious. The realignment of rural ridings, making them larger to increase the voting base, in my opinion would not be in the best interests of Alberta, ladies and gentlemen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much for your very well-thought-out and comprehensive brief.

Questions from committee members? Yes, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just one quick question for Lyle. Do I understand you to say, then, that you would not support a constituency which was half urban and half rural to get it up to the population? Is that what you said?

MR. ANDERSON: If at all possible, I would stay away from it. No matter what you do, you're going to have trade-offs. I said a maximum of 20,000. You could split Medicine Hat down the centre and have two 20,000-person ridings. You stated earlier in your brief . . . Cypress-Redcliff is partially rural and partially urban, but your areas are probably about 2 to 1. Ours would be about 2,000 to 1 urban to rural, areawise. As I stated in my brief, where at all possible I would like to see the committee look at making more seats. In Edmonton and Calgary it's easy to say. Medicine Hat is a little harder. Instead of making, say, 18,000- to 20,000-person seats, you'd have two 15,000 legislative seats. But when you come down to setting definite numbers, you start locking. Okay; fine. If you get into this area and you need another 40 people, you might end up taking in another however many square miles. There is irrigation farming and there is dryland farming. Their needs are totally different. You have unions; you have businesses. You have a lot of interests for an MLA to take care of it. Granted, I'm not telling you anything you don't know. I've never been in your shoes. I don't care to try and tell you what your jobs are. These are just opinions I've come up with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's fine.

MR. ANDERSON: Did you want to know who I was speaking for? He didn't ask me when I came in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are you here representing a group?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah. I'm representing the Cypress-Redcliff Progressive Conservative Association.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Anything else? First, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: No, that's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we go on to Pam, who's next, can you all hear? All right, we'll try to speak a little louder, and

there are some empty seats at the front. If anyone would like to come up, please do. Bob, could we close the door at the back. That might help as well.

Okay. Pam and then Stock.

MS BARRETT: Are you then advocating an increase in the size of the Assembly?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, I am.

MS BARRETT: To 109, the number that you . . .

MR. ANDERSON: No, no. I said historically. I said I would increase it to where . . . The municipal vote has increased drastically. My only statement was: today's Legislature is representing way more population with less increase in percentage of seats. I was just using it as a comparison. From the figures I got on the 1971 census, each member of the Legislature is representing an average 25 percent increase in population. So I didn't say it should get bigger. I wanted to tie it into something to show why it could be larger and justify it.

MS BARRETT: But you are saying it should be larger. You're just not saying by how much.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, I read that Calgary's population in 1971 was 400,000. It's now 700,000. I'm not sure what the increase in MLAs has been, so I don't want to state if it's kept pace with that.

MS BARRETT: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate your presentation. Thirty-three towns and hamlets in that constituency, Cypress-Redcliff: is that a record? Do you know?

MR. ANDERSON: I have no idea. You can go to Peace River and a good portion of the population base of Peace River is in Fort McMurray. You can go to some of the larger ridings and the population does have more concentrated areas. The largest town in Cypress-Redcliff is Redcliff, with a population of 3,800. You then have Bow Island with 1,500, Foremost with 600. Then you have a lot that are just a couple of hundred people, which isn't a big deal until, say, the town of Irvine's water well goes out, which is about 200 people, and I believe last year they were hauling water about a month. I imagine they were working with the government, because they did get grants to drill a new well. But there are quite a few little towns all through this constituency, and for the record I'm not sure.

MR. DAY: That's what you were referring to in terms of reasonable access then.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. Like I said, no matter who you are, everyone wants access to a point if they need something from their MLA. As Mr. Bogle said, someone suggested you concentrate Taber-Warner. You could probably also throw Little Bow in there and still come up with a number. If you dropped the number of seats, that wouldn't look too unreasonable on population. The thing is, if you want to go to an executive

meeting for a riding, you might as well plan a weekend in Calgary. Now I sometimes drive an hour to two hours to a meeting.

MR. DAY: Well, if you're planning a weekend anywhere, consider Red Deer.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay.

MR. DAY: Just pursuing this population question, you said in '71 the population was 1.2 million?

MR. ANDERSON: One point six. The number I got from the '71 census was 1.627 million.

MR. DAY: So you're saying the population has grown faster than the number of seats in the Legislature. We understand that. Then you're advocating or suggesting there should be some increase in the number of seats, and you're not stipulating how many. From your feeling of being out there and talking with people in your area, with the concern about costs of government, do you think there would be a negative reaction?

MR. ANDERSON: There's always a negative reaction when it applies to the cost of government. It's called taxes.

MR. DAY: You feel it would be justified?

MR. ANDERSON: I think people in the long run would rather have it. It's like you have a cost; if you don't get anything for the cost, it's a total waste of money. If I have access to my MLA, at least I can see what access I have to the cost. Some people do not use the cost of government. You can ask certain factions of our population who's in power and they probably wouldn't know; they have no interest. But to the people that do have reason, be it a pension - well, that's federal - if someone wants something to do with hospitals or something and wants access to it, it's nice to know it's at least close to where you're at and maybe your member has a little more personal interest.

MR. DAY: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, can you hear? Are we okay? All right. Good.

Let's go to you, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

Lyle, last evening we had the mayor of Calgary make a presentation to the committee, and he offered that if one of the options we were looking at would be to increase the number of seats, we could increase Calgary to 27, Edmonton to 24, and other areas of the province at 45. It would give a population of about 16,000 throughout the province. Still, in southern Alberta there would be a number of constituencies that would have problems meeting 16,000 people, although I don't know how one would otherwise measure equity.

MR. ANDERSON: I know you're talking about the 25 percent rule. You're talking 25 percent on the average. Now you've got a spread of 9,400 voters. If you go to the 10,000 and 20,000 minimum/maximum, you're still just about at the 9,400 . . . Well, you have to be one or the other, the minimum or maximum.

MR. SIGURDSON: Again, this committee has the opportunity to make any number of recommendations to government. Perhaps one of the recommendations we may look at is increasing the communications an MLA is entitled to so that instead of having to drive from one end of the constituency to the other, an MLA might have two, perhaps three, constituency offices so that constituents could get to an office within a shorter period of time using telephone, telecommunications, fax machines. Do you think that would facilitate an MLA's job?

MR. ANDERSON: It definitely does help, but like I was saying, rural Alberta definitely in the long run . . . Like I said, ridings the way they are are quite large. I would say in the long run most people are quite happy with how they are, and I would like to see them stay that way. I don't want to see a riding get to the point, you know: "I've got an MLA. Where's he from? What's his name? Why did I go vote today?" Everyone has their little pocket, and you are going to have a nucleus around that pocket. After a while are you going to get any representation, or are you going to be just a splinter group? "Oh, yeah, they're out in the hinterlands somewhere down in that corner; they don't matter." I'm not saying MLAs would do that. I'm saying that if you get down to where there's a problem, get in a big area, even in the city of Calgary you can get two neighbourhoods that have a different opinion and you've got to sit in the middle of it. You get into the rural area and even more so you can have . . . You know, you can have an irrigation farmer who's got one problem and a dryland farmer who has another problem, and you have to sit in the middle of it. The bigger the area, the more you're going to be unable to reasonably maintain communication with both and help solve their problems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Lyle, one question I was going to ask you is: do you feel there is enough of a distinction between requirements for the rural as opposed to the urban population, that it would be very difficult to combine an urban and a rural riding into one?

MR. ANDERSON: I think you'd find the people have quite different ideas about how to do things. There are totally different problems. You go into a city and say, "How's your sewer?" and they say, "Phone the city." When my sewer pump goes, you ask me how my sewer is and I'll be down in the septic tank looking at it. You have different problems. One thing you do have distinct in cities is that everything is provided for. You pay your taxes and you get your road done, you get this done. In the rural you're more responsible for that stuff to a point.

To me it's a different lifestyle. Why do so many people say, "If I could live in the country"? They want out of the city. Or when a lot of people get there, they say, "I want back in the city." There are definite similarities, but there are also a lot of differences.

MRS. BLACK: Because of the potential dissimilarities you've talked about, do you think there's a need for a two-tiered system on distribution, one for urban and one for rural?

MR. ANDERSON: I think an adjustment. I'm saying you'd end up with a two-tiered system. Your municipal would probably end up with a higher population, up towards the 20,000

mark.

MRS. BLACK: I'm talking about a different average. I think right now we have 18,000 eligible voters per riding. Do you feel there has to be a distinction between 18,000 for an urban setting and 10,000 or 12,000 for a rural setting?

MR. ANDERSON: It would definitely make it a lot easier to set up ridings that weren't too cumbersome for one person to represent.

MRS. BLACK: We heard that yesterday in Vulcan quite loud and clear.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, if you started setting up two averages, it would then drop . . . What you're saying, then, is the one number would drop down lower and the other one might go up higher, which . . . Yeah, it's a matter of looking at pros and cons, and I haven't thought enough about it.

MRS. BLACK: The difficulty with that, of course, is that we have a constitutional right of representation by population, which causes a constitutional battle. I'm trying to get ideas out of you.

MR. ANDERSON: True, but we've got a problem now that's . . . At least you're bringing it in closer. If it doesn't work, like you said, every eight to 10 years you're going to be looking at it again. If it's not working, you can keep going. It's not like jumping off the bridge and letting the chips fall where they may.

MRS. BLACK: Well, that's true.

The last question I have, Mr. Chairman. Right now in Alberta we have our distribution based on eligible voters. In other jurisdictions the distribution is based on full population, which would mean, I believe you quoted, 2.4 million in total population. When you look at the province, a large piece of that unenumerated population is in fact in the rural settings. We just had an example of the Blood Indian Reserve that wasn't enumerated. We have some of the Hutterite colonies that are not enumerated. Do you feel we should shift from distribution based on eligible voter to distribution based on total population?

MR. ANDERSON: I don't think you'll find a great difference. There will be, like you were saying, exceptions where there is a difference, but I think you'll find as a whole your eligible voters . . . I'm speaking off the top of my head on some of the numbers I've seen. Medicine Hat had a population of 26,000 people in 1971. I'm not sure what the voter base was. The population of Alberta right now is 2.3 million. The eligible voters are 1.5 million. Medicine Hat has got a population of around 40,000 to 45,000, and their eligible voters are around 30,000. I think the gap would stay pretty consistent, be it by population or eligible voters. I don't think you'd see enough of a change. Either way we'd probably . . .

MRS. BLACK: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I apologize for the fan. It should kick out momentarily. Hopefully then we'll be back to quiet.

Are there any questions anyone has or any comments anyone would like to make in addition to what Lyle has said?

Thank you very much then. We'll move on next to Vincent.

MR. FABIAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I thank you for this opportunity to present our brief. Mr. Chairman, your preamble took care of some of my remarks. However, I'll repeat them anyway.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, and ladies and gentlemen, the county of Newell board of education studied the negative impact the pending electoral boundaries redistribution would have on our jurisdiction and have authorized me to present our concerns to you for your consideration.

We are aware that Alberta statutes require that a new Electoral Boundaries Commission be established after every second provincial election to study and possibly amend Alberta's electoral boundaries. We are also led to believe, because of the British Columbia Supreme Court ruling and its potential ramifications, the government has delayed forming this commission and has instead struck a special all-party committee of the Legislature to study the legality and propriety of Alberta's current system.

We acknowledge that in the urban areas each MLA represents more voters than his or her counterpart in the rural sector. It should be noted, however, that MLAs in Calgary can walk across their respective constituencies faster than most rural MLAs can drive through theirs. It should also be noted that Calgary's 18 MLAs collectively enjoy the luxury of having to meet only one council, two school boards, one health unit, and one regional planning commission, as well as a number of hospital boards. The rural MLA, meanwhile, is obliged to serve several councils, school boards, and hospital boards. Please allow me to give you an example.

Our local MLA, Tom Musgrove, is obliged to look after the needs, concerns, and demands of the councils of the towns of Brooks and Bassano, the villages of Rosemary, Duchess, and Tilley, not to mention the hamlets that were discussed just a while ago - I did not include them; we have about four or five of them - the county of Newell, Brooks school district, county of Newell board of education, Southeastern Alberta Health Unit, Brooks hospital, Bassano hospital, Eastern Irrigation District, and the Southeast Alberta Planning Commission.

We recognize that Bow Valley constituency has a total population of just under 20,000 - 19,985 to be exact - with 11,486 voters, which is well below the urban average. We must also recognize, however, that if Bow Valley were increased in size considerably, as it would have to be in order to conform with the average population syndrome, the demands - or, as I call it, the rural stress factor - on our local MLA would increase significantly, and as a result he would be unable to carry out his duties and responsibilities effectively.

Perhaps an even better example of an MLA being subjected to the rural stress factor syndrome would be Mr. Bob Bogle, whose constituency is comprised of two major municipalities, the municipal district of Taber and the county of Warner, with all their inherent and attendant problems and responsibilities.

Our province, experiencing very difficult times economically, continues to rely more heavily than ever on gas and oil revenues, most of which come from the rural areas. Consequently, it is most imperative that rural Alberta has strong representation in this very important sector. Agriculture, similar to the gas and oil industry, remains a very vital part of our economy, and we hereby emphasize that strong rural representation is also required to protect agriculture and the family farm.

The government of Alberta has taken a position which the citizens of this province agree with, that lesser populated areas require disproportionate representation in order to ensure that their interests are protected. This is the very basis of the Triple E Senate philosophy which Alberta has long advocated. It is inconsistent to suggest that Alberta deserves equal representation in Ottawa if we do not also accept that rural Alberta deserves equal representation in Edmonton. Let's stand behind the motto "equal, elected, and effective." Citizens have a right to an accessible MLA, and the MLA should have the opportunity to be readily available. Already some provincial constituencies, particularly in northern Alberta, are so large as to make this very difficult. If constituencies in the less populated areas of the province were required to be equal in population to the more densely populated urban areas, they would have to be of such geographic vastness as to severely hamper the local MLA's ability to properly meet the demands and needs of their constituents, thus rural Alberta would have suffered not only a decrease in the quantity of representation in the provincial government but also, inevitably, a reduction in the quality of their representation.

We would urge the committee not to panic in spite of the B.C. court ruling, and as you discuss the pros and cons of this problem, please apply the Triple E concept to all your deliberations and recommendations.

Mr. Chairman and board, thank you for allowing us to make this presentation. Respectfully submitted, Vincent Fabian.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Vincent. We appreciate your brief. Questions, panel members?

MS BARRETT: I'd just like to ask you one question about the map that's been coloured in pink. What you'll see is geographically some very large ridings in the northern part of the province, some of which fall within the 25 percent rule, and those are in white, and some of which fall outside the 25 percent rule, and those are in pink. What you'll also see on this diagram is that there are some pink ridings that geographically are quite small.

Is there anything you would do to change this picture?

MR. FABIAN: Well, I guess we can't be firm. Nothing's cast in stone. We've got to use some common sense. I would consent to minor changes. The system that's in place now with respect to agriculture and the family farm and basically the rural representation: I guess some modification can be made or maybe should be made - however, minor, not to drop to 50 percent or double the others, which would be disproportionate. Like I say, we're advocating disproportionate representation in Ottawa, and I would hope some of this could be applied to the provincial electoral boundaries.

MS BARRETT: Are you basically saying, then, no decrease in the number of rural ridings?

MR. FABIAN: I would hope that would be the case.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just a follow-up. With an increase in the number of urban seats?

MR. FABIAN: Well, this is where I say some modifications, perhaps, would be made, although I would hope that . . .

Somebody asked about the two-tier system. Was it yourself? I would like to look at that. I know constitutionally it may not be acceptable. Well, I don't know; I still wouldn't panic. I think I would look for increasing some in the urban areas - not too drastic. There is a discrepancy among the urbans as well. You know, it goes from a high of 50 down to whatever, 20. I've got the stuff in here, but I think that can be averaged out a little bit too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Anyone from the audience? Thanks again, Vincent.

Dan, we're ready to move on to you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Dan Smith, and I am the president of the Medicine Hat provincial Progressive Conservative Association. I have a very brief brief, and for a lawyer that's something to say.

I'd like to pass these out, Mr. Chairman, so all members have a copy. What I propose to do is read the recommendations and then make some brief oral commentary in regard to them.

One, all proposed electoral divisions, whether urban or rural, should use the 25 percent over and above average. Albeit this is a departure from the present legislation, our association believes the 25 percent over and above average is a fair ratio. We are distinctly against making the ratio any smaller than 25 percent. For example, a ratio of 15 percent or 10 percent would injure the flexibility of the legislation and, therefore, the flexibility of the boundary drawers. Furthermore, to move the percentage less than 25 percent would be prejudicial to rural areas as it would cause the loss of too many rural constituencies, and we are extremely mindful of that in southern Alberta.

The second and third recommendations I will lump together. The voter population of urban electoral divisions within Edmonton and Calgary should be as equal as possible. Three, Edmonton and Calgary electoral divisions should not extend past their municipal boundaries. I think this is a reflection of the present legislation. Edmonton and Calgary have massive population bases. They should not be permitted to co-opt with areas of lesser population.

Number 4. There should be three more electoral divisions in Calgary, bringing its total to 21, and two more electoral divisions in Edmonton, bringing its total to 19. As a voter from an area of less population, I am not thrilled with that. But the bare facts are that Edmonton and Calgary have 53 percent of the voter population and 42 percent of the electoral divisions. This recommendation would bring Edmonton and Calgary to the point where they have 48 percent of the electoral divisions. You from Calgary and Edmonton may not be concerned about the dominance of Calgary and Edmonton. We in Medicine Hat and other rural areas are very mindful of the potential of that dominance.

Number 5. The total number of electoral divisions within Alberta should remain at 83. It is submitted that anything more than 83 is not politically salable to the voters of this province, and we do not want less than 83.

Number 6. The balance of the province should be divided into electoral divisions; that would appear fairly obvious.

Numbers 7 and 8. The intention of the legislation should be to attempt to maintain urban centres outside of Edmonton and Calgary as urban electoral divisions and to maintain rural areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary as rural electoral divisions. Many of our executive have lived in rural communities. They have voiced strongly that rural people are very intent on

maintaining their long-standing rural traditions free from the overextending influence of big cities even in their political lives.

Numbers 9, 10, and 11. The legislation should permit, when appropriate, a rural electoral division proximate to a municipal boundary to penetrate the municipal boundary in order to bring the population of the rural electoral division within the 25 percent average. The thinking here is that rural electoral divisions, in order to keep them somewhat geographically within their present boundaries and without getting absolutely out of control geographically, may enter or penetrate into a municipal, an urban, area outside of Calgary and Edmonton.

Also in number 10, in any extended rural electoral division – in other words, a rural electoral division which extends into a municipal boundary – the population of it should not be greater than the provincial constituency average for voter population.

Number 11, which is extremely important. The voter population within a municipal boundary which becomes part of an extended rural electoral division should not exceed the voter population of the rural portion of the extended electoral division. In other words, if a rural electoral division were to co-opt with, for instance, Medicine Hat or Red Deer or any other portion, the result should not be that the voter population within the portion of the municipal boundaries taken in be greater than the rural population which existed prior to the penetration.

Finally, number 12. In view of the uncertainties created by the Charter of Rights and the recent decision of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, this legislation, prior to its proclamation and implementation, should be referred to the appropriate judicial body for consideration as to its legality. It is my understanding that the government can make a reference to the Court of Appeal of Alberta. I suggest that that mechanism be used. It will save problems as existed in the B.C. legislation with a successful challenge. Furthermore, it will keep egg off the face of this committee, all of our MLAs, and the perception of Albertans and the rest of Canada.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Dan.

Yes, Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Dan. I appreciate the point-by-point presentation.

You talk about allowing a rural penetration into a municipal area, but you seem really firm in point 3 that that should not happen in Edmonton or Calgary.

MR. SMITH: Yes.

MR. DAY: Why?

MR. SMITH: Well, my thinking is that the present legislation says that Edmonton and Calgary cannot extend past their municipal boundaries. Fair is fair. The rural areas shouldn't, and probably do not want to, be part of Edmonton and Calgary.

MR. DAY: If it came to a choice of a rural constituency disappearing or else taking a slice out of a constituency within the municipal boundaries of Edmonton or Calgary, would you have a recommendation?

MR. SMITH: Well, I think we've tried to maintain flexibility here, and certainly voter equity is a question of relativity. Voter equity for someone in downtown Calgary can be a heck of a lot

different than voter equity for someone who lives on the American border, and I would not want to take that flexibility away and make it an absolute rule. The intention is not to do that, but it is suggested that the intention is to maintain whenever possible that distinction between the rural and urban areas except where it's appropriate or necessary to do otherwise.

MR. DAY: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you. In the first point you made, you talked about trying to use the 25 percent variance. Some jurisdictions have tried to work towards a zero variance and justified those areas that fall outside. For example, in Saskatchewan the two most northern constituencies, which cover approximately half the province, have a variance of minus 50 percent because of the sparsity of population. I'm just wondering if you would have any comment on working towards zero and justifying extremes.

MR. SMITH: If one is going to be fair and create a balance, I would suggest that 50 percent on either side of an average is out of the ballpark. However, on the other hand, I see a zero variance as being very inflexible, and I would suggest that the 25 percent over and above seems to have been somewhat ordained by the court in British Columbia already as some sort of a reasonable average. It's submitted to the committee that to extend past 25 percent is not fair to the urbanites, and I would suggest that to go to an absolute is not fair to the rural voter.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just one other question we have. Both Medicine Hat and St. Albert are quite large in their voter population. If we were able to make recommendations, if we followed your guidelines – and correct me if I'm wrong – especially in the area of southern Alberta, if you take the two constituencies of Medicine Hat and Cypress-Redcliff, I'm not sure if we could follow your recommendation 10, I think it is, and still work it in with number 1. I know it's a bit of an absorption, but if we try and develop a couple of constituencies out of those large populated areas, I'm not sure that there's going to be that equity between rural voters and urban voters. Or am I misunderstanding?

MR. SMITH: I think you are. How this thing is finally drawn on the map . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: It's going to be a plate of spaghetti.

MR. SMITH: I can't even begin to think how I can help you. On the other hand, I do not see points 1 and 10 as being inconsistent. Point 1 is just the 25 percent average, and what is attempted to be gained by point 10 is that you do not have the domination by the urban riding of the rural population if that rural riding penetrates the municipal boundary of a city, like St. Albert for instance. Our submission is that to have a rural riding which co-opts part of a municipal with the result that you've got 80 percent urban voters and 20 percent rural voters is not fair and is inequitable.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. So then Cypress-Redcliff could come in and take 10,000 out of Medicine Hat. I'm not saying that as an exact . . .

MR. SMITH: No. They could take 5,000, but they couldn't . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: A matching population from the city of . . .

MR. SMITH: Right.

MR. SIGURDSON: I understand that. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? One further question, Dan, and it has to do with a follow-up to Tom's. A number of provinces and, indeed, the federal government allow for a variation beyond the 25 percent factor to account for sparsely populated remote areas. On the federal side we've got two ridings in the Northwest Territories and one riding in the Yukon as examples. Would you make any provision for variation in Alberta beyond the minus 25 percent factor?

MR. SMITH: The answer in one word, yes, as long as it is legally salable. If it's not in breach of the Charter of Rights and the Court of Appeal or even the Supreme Court of Canada says it is not, then I have no problem with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I assume then, just to follow it up, if we made such a provision and we found that we were in violation of the Charter, then the federal House would also be in violation of the Charter with the two territories.

MR. SMITH: They may be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because unlike Prince Edward Island, which is guaranteed its four seats because of its Senate representation, there's no such guarantee for the territories that we're aware of.

MR. SMITH: True.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else, a question to Dan?

Okay. Thanks very much, Dan. That's an interesting point you made relative to a rural riding co-opting part of an urban area. That's the first time we've heard that particular element. Moving on, Fred, please.

MR. MELLEN: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're from Bow Island?

MR. MELLEN: Yes. And Bob, let's shake hands first because we won't after.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, is that right?

MR. MELLEN: We appreciate the opportunity to address the group, from the town of Bow Island. The council of the town of Bow Island wish to express their views and concerns regarding the electoral boundaries amendment Act, 1989. The town of Bow Island is unanimous in their opposition to any change in the current electoral boundaries.

One, representation based solely on population is not fair or equitable. A prime example of power is that which southern Ontario wields in federal politics. The same type of electoral power will be evident in Alberta if we continue to elect more MLAs from the urban areas. If the justice system of Canada rules that representation is only fair and equitable by population, then it behooves the elected officials of our country to change

the justice system. And I appreciate Dan Smith's comments, which were in tune with us.

Two, rural Alberta is facing a depopulation crisis. This fact is borne out by Premier Getty's appointment of the Hon. Raymond Speaker as minister in charge of addressing this problem.

Three, the Cypress-Redcliff constituency has a voter population of 8,935, well below the suggested minimum of 14,014. This is not the fault of the rural area. It is the society we live in which has forced families off the farm, to migrate to the cities to find employment.

The concept of creating a Cypress-Redcliff/Medicine Hat constituency by drawing an imaginary line through a portion of the city of Medicine Hat is an option which will no doubt be considered. We do not concur with this option. It is our opinion that rural and urban should not be mixed. Our problems are vastly different than those in the urban ridings. It is conceivable that our next MLA could live in Medicine Hat and represent us. This is not acceptable because of rural issues. We would be out of his/her scope of interest/knowledge.

Five, the advent of increasing the number of MLAs in the cities and reducing the number of MLAs in the rural areas to accommodate the electoral boundary representation is frightening. We foresee a time in the near future that would see rural Alberta with no representation whatsoever.

Six, agriculture is still considered to be one of the main industries within the province of Alberta. By virtue of amending the electoral boundaries, this exercise will reduce the rural representation and increase the urban representation. There is no question that the realignment of the electoral boundaries will reduce the agricultural interest in legislation. We deem this to be a very negative move.

Our position would be to remain with the status quo. But if we must – and underline "must" – conform to the population guidelines, then we would prefer to join with an adjoining rural area, as we would have a somewhat common interest. We realize this would result in a very large rural area being represented by one MLA, but this is preferable to being dominated by an urban centre with different priorities and interests.

Eight, we've gone through the exercise of realigning the electoral boundaries for southern Alberta ourselves to reflect a realignment suggestion for the committee to consider. You will note the smallest constituency in this scenario has a population of 15,105. In this scenario the constituency of Cypress-Redcliff would be enlarged to include 6,770 voters from the Taber-Warner area, for 15,605. Cardston would receive 7,000 from Taber-Warner for a total of 15,105. This eliminates Taber-Warner; hence the handshake.

MR. DAY: Is there a vote on this today?

MR. MELLEN: I think so.

The Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and Macleod constituencies would join for a total of 20,310. Little Bow and Bow Valley would join, for 20,631. The Medicine Hat constituency would be increased to allow for two MLAs, similar to Lethbridge. The two MLAs representing Medicine Hat could represent approximately 14,000 to 15,000 each, which is similar in number to the suggested new alignments. The present number of MLAs is eight, excluding Lethbridge, and under this scenario the number of MLAs would be reduced to six.

Point 9, the council of the town of Bow Island has had the opportunity to review the submission being presented here today

a little later by the county of Forty Mile. We concur with and support their views.

The council of the town of Bow Island appreciates the opportunity to present a brief and trust that our comments and suggestions will be considered in making decisions. This was formally adopted at last night's town council meeting.

The last pages are realignments of the boundaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Fred.

MR. MELLEN: No questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions from committee members?

MR. MELLEN: What will we do with Bob?

MR. BRUSEKER: Just a logical extension, then, now that we've eliminated Mr. Bogle. Can I assume, then, that you would look at the same kind of redistribution process occurring in some of those other purple constituencies a little farther north from here, where perhaps we might take three constituencies and make two?

MR. MELLEN: We're only experts in southern Alberta. We wouldn't want to tackle their problems.

MR. BRUSEKER: But I'm just looking sort of from a philosophical standpoint. What you're saying is combine the rural areas and keep the rural areas rural.

MR. MELLEN: Yes. Again, our point was that we'd like to remain with the status quo.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, that's the first preference; we'd agree.

MR. MELLEN: Yeah, that's the first preference.

MR. BRUSEKER: I picked that up. But you're saying, "Keep the rural areas rural."

MR. MELLEN: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?

MR. MELLEN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, before you leave, Fred: why me?

We have one urban/rural situation in the province, Red Deer. When Red Deer was about to move from one seat representing the entire city to two seats, the past commission went beyond the city boundaries into the county of Red Deer. One of the MLAs for Red Deer is with us on the panel, and he has expressed from time to time his views on how that works. Keeping that in mind, along with Dan's comments about where you have a rural constituency coming in and co-opting part of an urban area you'd limit the amount of that urban centre going in so there wouldn't be the domination you referred to, I wonder: does that change your views at all? Or is it something you'd like to think about with your council, give some thought to relative to . . .

MR. MELLEN: No, that wouldn't change our views at all. We

hate it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It wouldn't change them, eh? Okay. All right.

Do you want to comment any further?

MR. DAY: Yeah. Mr. Chairman, it is interesting, being in that situation. And I don't presume to be a country boy, but I find it personally challenging and somewhat gratifying to be able to become knowledgeable. Because I have to; I've got farmers, I've got feedlots, and I've got very clear rural enterprises going on in the constituency of Red Deer-North. That, to me, broadens my own perspectives, for one thing. But I have yet to find one case where a concern brought to me, let's say by a feedlot operator - he has never suggested that he would worry that somebody in Red Deer urban would somehow come to me and say, "I don't care about that feedlot operator's concern." A grain farmer, somebody who's got concern about a method of payment for instance, would never run into opposition in Red Deer city by coming to me and wanting me to represent that concern, mainly because anybody in Red Deer city wouldn't understand the concern anyway. This is just for your information, not from the point of view of debate.

I appreciated your presentation, other than maybe the one point on Taber-Warner. I'll have to take that up with the chairman. But I do find it interesting to hear there is that strong aversion to a rural constituency being partly blended with an urban. I've found that in practice it really can work without difficulty, and the last two elections seemed to indicate that those people in the rural area haven't been overly offended by that.

MR. MELLEN: Stock, I'd say that if this were your whole constituency and this were the city, you'd have a concentrated group of 6,000 here. You're going to pay more attention to them when the election comes.

MR. DAY: Well, again I'm just speaking out of practice. My overwhelming concentration is the city, in Red Deer, and I still try and balance my time out even between elections, door to door as it were, in the rural areas. When it comes down to something like sheer door-knocking, obviously you can cover more in a more populated area. But just as an MLA would find in a city that he'll give just as much attention to one community league as another, so he or she does give just as much attention to one individual farmer coming in and saying, "I've got a problem with this." But that's just for your information. I appreciate your perspective, Fred.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Mellen, as an urban member of the Legislature, I just want to let you know that regardless of what happens, whether there's an increase in urban representation or a decrease in rural representation, agricultural concerns in our province are always going to be paramount in the Legislative Assembly.

As an opposition member I should also advise you that one of the things I think the Premier did very well was to chair the agricultural task force he set up with cabinet, and he did that when he was the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I think all MLAs, whether we're from an urban centre or from a rural area,

try to represent the interests of the province as best we can, recognizing that it's the whole province that we try to represent. We don't try to isolate our opinions or points of view to just the constituencies, although we do try to help our constituents in that fashion.

MR. MELLEN: I'd submit to you that if all of you people were from the urban areas, you wouldn't get the feedback and input unless you had some MLAs from the rural areas to keep pushing it in front of you.

MR. SIGURDSON: That's true, but knowing the economic importance of rural Alberta - you know, we as urban MLAs are cognizant of that - we can't just isolate the rural area and say, "Well, it doesn't matter to us," because it plays a very important role in the economic well-being of our province.

MR. MELLEN: Well, we appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions or comments for Fred? All right. We'll move on then.
That was Fred; now Bryan.

MR. DILLENBECK: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, Bryan Dillenbeck, wearing my hat today as past president of the Foremost & District Agricultural Society. This brief is presented on behalf of them.

Be it moved and seconded that the Foremost & District Agricultural Society make representation to the Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries and express to the committee the concerns of the Society on proposed changes to the electoral boundaries. Carried 12/05/89.

The Foremost & District Agricultural Society has as its membership 250 members of the electoral district of Cypress-Redcliff. The society plays a vital role in the promotion of the district and supports the clubs and service organizations in the district.

The society members feel that the biggest detriment is the loss of accessibility to the MLA. The communication between these people and the MLA is important in two ways: the society can offer vital input to the MLA on issues concerning the rural communities; the MLA can respond to the inquiries and concerns sent from the society that are important to its operation.

The society feels a larger constituency would have a large impact on the funds allocated to it. These funds are used to support the projects and activities of the local clubs and service organizations. The reduction of these funds, because funds are based on each constituency, would impact the work done by these organizations for the community.

The society members feel that a larger electoral district would reduce the contact these people enjoy with the MLA. Members feel that this contact is important to the survival of rural areas and, in turn, the viability of the society.

Even though the revised system is to allow equal representation of the people of Alberta by the MLA, the members of the Foremost & District Ag Society urge the committee to consider how such a planned change would affect the work done in the community by itself and other service clubs and organizations.

Just on my own, I would like to echo the thoughts of Fred here, and it's the thoughts of the ag society, that we are definitely opposed to a rural/urban constituency. We feel it would be very detrimental to our purposes.

Before you ask me a question, one other question I would like

to ask you is: has it been taken into consideration that there are 13 Hutterite colonies in Cypress-Redcliff of which very few are enumerated?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I can respond to that by saying that we as a committee have asked for a statistical breakdown, looking at a total population basis rather than an elector basis. We believe there may be some benefit there for rural constituencies for a number of reasons: some of the colonies and some of the Indian bands have chosen not to be enumerated, the fact that we have slightly larger families in rural areas than in the cities. So the committee will shortly be reviewing those figures to see if, in fact, by going to total population rather than just a list of eligible electors, that helps with the balance. We believe it will.
Anything else?

MRS. BLACK: Can I just ask a question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure; go ahead.

MRS. BLACK: Do you feel, Bryan, that we should have our distribution based on full population, then, as opposed to eligible voters?

MR. DILLENBECK: Yes. In areas like ours, where we have such a high concentration of Hutterites, I feel it is imperative that we go to full population, because each one of these colonies is averaging 80 to 140 people, and they're increasing. So if we leave them out of the total picture, our problem in Cypress-Redcliff is going to gradually get worse. We are working toward the time when the Hutterites are going to vote. There are more and more each year who consent to be enumerated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?

MR. DAY: You guys just don't trust city slickers do you?

MR. DILLENBECK: Experience, my friend, experience.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Vince.

MR. FABIAN: Mr. Chairman, a thought just occurred to me after the last speaker here. We also have six Hutterite colonies, and there are quite a number of Mennonite people in our area who also are not enumerated. Perhaps the total population syndrome may be a wiser move than the voters' list, because of those things. That's something to consider. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, moving on. Cathy.

MRS. GRIFFIN: Hi, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Cathy Griffin, and I'm from Bow Valley. I'm not here today representing a vast number of the voter population; I'm here just on behalf of a few people of Alberta. They asked me to come today. Mr. Bogle has a petition that I was asked to present today from our polling station. We would like to be moved from the Bow Valley constituency into Mr. Hyland's Cypress-Redcliff riding.

I'd like to give you a little history of this petition. Right after the last election about 90 percent of the voters came into the polling station and asked who was running. We felt that obviously we weren't being represented the way we would like to be. So we got together and decided we would like to be moved into Cypress-Redcliff riding, and we made this petition

up. We didn't know anything about your committee at that time. We were just going to send it to Edmonton and hope somebody would read it. I was asked to bring it here today. I'd like to read it, if I could.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Cathy.

MRS. GRIFFIN:

We, the constituents of Bow Valley (05) Polling Station #1, wish to be removed from this district and placed within the boundaries of the Cypress-Redcliff Constituency.

The reasons were:

- We conduct all our business in Redcliff and Medicine Hat.
- Our concerns relate closely to the concerns of the Cypress-Redcliff area.
- We are served by the *Cypress Courier* and *Commentator* newspapers, originating in Bow Island and relating all the Cypress-Redcliff happenings.
- We feel that our needs and concerns would be better served through Cypress-Redcliff due to our close proximity to the Redcliff office.

I can see why he's asked to present it today, because this shows what happens when the boundaries get too large. Many people do not know who is running. Mr. Musgrove is our MLA. He has known for over six months that we wish to be removed to Mr. Hyland's riding, and we've never heard a word from him. As far as we knew, it was fine. I think it has bearing today on what happens when the boundaries get too big. Nobody knows we're there, and we don't know where anybody else is. A large percentage of the population has signed this, and the other ones just weren't home at the time. It was all done on a volunteer basis.

Does anybody have any questions?

MR. SIGURDSON: Just one very brief question, Cathy. Is there some kind of a natural boundary between Cypress-Redcliff and Bow Valley? Is there a river or a stream or a range of mountains? No, sorry. I was thinking of Dunvegan.

MRS. GRIFFIN: There is the hill at the end of our lane. That was where they put the boundary. Our riding starts approximately two miles west of Redcliff and runs clear up to Brooks. It goes north to the British block, and if you look in the map there in yellow, you will see a little jog right above the town of Medicine Hat. If you look to the left of that, that's us.

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, I see. Okay.

MRS. GRIFFIN: I should have brought a larger map today. I didn't realize.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MRS. GRIFFIN: I just hope we are really asked and that this does not get put on the back burner until the other question is resolved, because even if we get put someplace else - which I sure hope we don't want to be, because already our boundaries are too large.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cathy, two points. First of all, the mandate of our committee is not to actually draw boundaries, although we've had a number of people come forward with some recommendations, and we've given them assurance, and we've asked them to do something as well. The assurance we've given is that

we will take the brief or the recommendations we've received, in your case the petition, and we will hold them until a commission is struck, and we will ensure they get them.

Secondly, once a commission has been established - and this was a result of, I believe, our second meeting, which was held in Peace River, when the returning officer for a neighbouring constituency came in and said: "You know, it would really be nice if the Electoral Boundaries Commission would come out and hold some hearings before they sit down and draw lines. It would be nice if they'd come out and listen to us so we could give some advice based on our current maps." We've heard that plea in other areas, so while the committee has not yet sat down to formulate any conclusions, I've certainly seen heads nodding at past meetings in sympathy with people who have expressed the kinds of concerns you have. We're looking for ways to ensure that the commission take into account trading patterns and areas of local interest, because I know what it's like with our local papers in terms of how we do things.

MRS. GRIFFIN: Well, I don't like that sentence - hold it until something has been decided - because . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the problem, Cathy: there's nothing we can do. It takes a commission to change. But remember that will occur between now and the next election, so you will not . . .

MRS. GRIFFIN: So we're asking you to do this for us, and you will give us your assurance that you will let somebody see this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're saying two things: first of all, we will get it in the hands of the commission when the commission is formed; secondly, once the commission's been formed, they will advertise and hold public meetings like we are today. We urge you then to come back into the process.

MRS. GRIFFIN: I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. You've handled it well, and it's a convincing way to demonstrate the commitment there is in your area for the change. In fact, when we sat down with Justice Tevie Miller, who chaired the commission in the late '70s, he made specific reference to coming to Medicine Hat to a public meeting, and only one person came out. It was an individual who lived north of the Hat and complained because in order to get to his polling station, while it was just across the river, he had to travel some distance to get around by a bridge. According to Justice Miller the meeting was worth while even though only one person came out, and they made the change.

MRS. GRIFFIN: Okay. And I would like to say that if you need this when you're making your decision about how large boundaries get and how things can get out of control, you're welcome to use it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Cathy.
Anything else?

MR. DAY: I think, Mr. Chairman, just a further comment that besides the actual recommendation, as Cathy has correctly identified, this has been a valuable example for us of some of the difficulties when boundaries start to expand and things that need to be anticipated. So I appreciate that.

MR. BRUSEKER: Cathy, I don't really know that particular area you're referring to. Is it largely a rural area, or is there a little village or town?

MRS. GRIFFIN: It's 100 percent rural. There's the small hamlet of Bowell in it, which houses 13 people. It is a rural area.

MR. BRUSEKER: The question I have, then, is one that you raised. I don't know if you can answer this, but you've pointed out the fact right there that the constituency of Bow Valley is very close to the town of Medicine Hat. I'm wondering if there is a larger chunk of Bow Valley that might feel the same way as your area.

MRS. GRIFFIN: We were going to ask the rest of Bow Valley, but we felt we could only speak for ourselves. We asked the people at the polling station and the people who were enumerated in this area. We can only speak for ourselves. We told the rest of them what we were doing and that if they wanted to present their own petition, they could. I don't like to speak for people that I'm not personally representing.

MR. ANDERSON: Just one thing. When you look at that map, right north of where she's talking about is the British block, which creates quite a barrier in itself.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. It's empty.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Yes, Fred.

MR. MELLEN: Cathy, I'd like to know how many people are on your petition. We want to save Bob's job here.

MRS. GRIFFIN: There are 72 people on the petition out of 108 eligible voters at the last enumeration, September '88.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will that move the line half a mile, Fred?

MR. MELLEN: Just below that, yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, we'll keep working on it. We'll get the colonies in, and maybe that'll help too.

MRS. GRIFFIN: Mr. Hyland has been spoken to, and he said we're welcome. We found out about this meeting through Mr. Hyland's office. We found out about the 4-H meetings through Mr. Hyland's office. We do all our business through Mr. Hyland's office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We're going to have a short, five-minute stretch break, if you want another coffee or juice, and if we can get the next six presenters here, please.

[The committee recessed from 2:36 p.m. to 2:42 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll reconvene. We'll begin with Ed Torsher. I've been asked that you introduce yourself and indicate whom you're representing. We'll do that at the outset, please.

MR. TORSHER: Okay. My name is Ed Torsher. I'm the

reeve of the county of Forty Mile, and I'm pleased to make a presentation on behalf of the county of Forty Mile.

Our council has discussed the mandate of your committee and the options you're considering for setting out the electoral boundaries for the province of Alberta. The county of Forty Mile No. 8 proposes the following factors, for which we will attempt to provide reasoning, for you to consider based on the existing boundaries and what impact major changes would have on a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Number 1, the population of the area as well as the number of electors. When electoral boundaries are established, they remain established as such for a number of years, and by considering the population of the electoral district, you may have some insight into the number of electors who will be in that district in the future. Population rather than electors would have an impact on the service required by a district.

Number 2, the distances a Member of the Legislative Assembly would have to travel to properly service his district. Relating to distances in the Cypress-Redcliff electoral division and comparing this district to, for example, Edmonton-Centre or Calgary-Elbow, you will find that the rural member in this case would have some 200 kilometres from the most northerly point to the most southerly point, compared to Edmonton-Centre or Calgary-Elbow, which in either case would be less than 15 kilometres. From east to west in the case scenarios used, the rural district is 135 kilometres wide. Once again, compare that to the city, and it's similar to what was said before. The member's home, in the case of Cypress-Redcliff, is fairly well centred in this district, reducing some of the travel time required. However, the member lives half an hour's drive from his constituency office, adding considerable time to his workload.

I would like to comment on a remark that was used earlier here about the use of electronic communications and so forth. These are certainly of value and are something that would need to be looked at. But would you feel that your child was getting an equal education from a long-distance ed program as he would if he were seated in a classroom associating closely with fellow students and a competent teacher?

Number 3, the distance a member is from the Legislative Assembly. I think this is important. Using again the comparison between Cypress-Redcliff and Edmonton-Centre, you will find that the rural member is six and a half to seven hours' drive away from the Legislature, compared to an urban example, Edmonton-Centre, being less than 10 minutes.

The number of different issues a rural member would have to deal with in comparison to an urban member. In Cypress-Redcliff the member has 5,596 kilometres of local roads, 708 kilometres of secondary road, and an additional 532 kilometres of primary highway to respond to on public request – and I would like to just say that the figures that I quote here are subject to corrections; I should be like a realtor and say plus or minus, more or less – innumerable miles of transmission lines and pipelines, and innumerable exploration activities and mineral developments. In the Cypress-Redcliff district there are over 1,603,700 hectares of farm and ranchland, including innumerable numbers of irrigated lands which he will be called upon to respond to the problems facing the agricultural industry.

Right here I want to apologize to the two members of the Legislature. When I say he, the she is the he that we're referring to.

In the district of Cypress-Redcliff there are three local governments – comprised of the municipal district of Cypress, the county of Forty Mile, and part of the MD of Taber – and

three towns: Redcliff, Bow Island, and Irvine. These I know have been quoted before. One that has never been mentioned and demands a lot of attention from the members of the Legislature in southern Alberta is the board of directors of the St. Mary irrigation district. All of these people are forwarding to the members concerns of theirs and of the members' constituents. Within Cypress-Redcliff district there are numerous other boards. They are listed here, and I won't go through them, in the interests of time.

In summation, we wish to express how extensive the role of the rural member is in comparison to that of our urban counterpart as a result of the many factors and pressure groups within his district. Therefore, we feel that the factors previously stated should be considered so that should the electors be the only reason for determining the boundaries of an electoral district, then the amount of electors should be varied for that of a rural district from that of an urban district to reflect the extra time and workload placed on a rural member. As an example, the average is 18,685. If we put a 2,000 factor onto that, which would bring that up to 20,685, the rural would then be reduced by 2,000 to 16,685. Then at this point the plus or minus 25 percent could be applied, thus reducing some of the major devastating changes that could occur if no consideration were given to the differences between an urban and a rural district.

We have used Cypress-Redcliff as an example only, as that is the district with which we are most familiar. However, the concerns we have expressed will also be evident to many of the other rural districts. We thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns. We hope to have provided you with reasons to consider a viable alternative to considering numbers of electors only in determining the size and boundaries of the electoral divisions.

Respectfully submitted by the county of Forty Mile, over my signature. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Ed.
Questions of Ed? Okay, first Tom and then Stock.

MR. SIGURDSON: When you used the example, Mr. Torsher, I did a quick little bit of math here, and I saw that if we were to take the upper end in the urban district and add that number, I would hazard the guess that in many instances we'd end up having the majority well over the variance. So, going towards the extreme of plus 25 percent, we could end up with 24,000 voters in urban areas. If we were to take the rural districts at 16,000, especially in southern Alberta, and use your variance thereafter, we'd end up at a lower end of 12,000. We're almost at 2 to 1. Two urban voters having the representation of one MLA as opposed to one in the rural parts: would you suggest that's fair?

MR. TORSHER: Well, considering the workload, perhaps the adjustment figure we put on there was too high. As I say, it was only to emphasize that you would consider some form of indexing, something else besides strictly numbers of heads.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. DAY: Well, my question's been answered, Mr. Chairman. Just a comment that I think this is the first time we've had a figure brought forward in terms of indexing, so it's an interesting approach.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Pam?

MS BARRETT: Sure. I think it's relevant to ask again the question that I put to one of the earlier panelists. That is that I understand the thrust of your statement, but when you look at this pink map, you'll see that the geography, the vastness of the electoral divisions, varies widely between certain rural ridings even on the pink zones. Is that a concern to you? Would you try to redress that at all?

MR. TORSHER: Well, once again I speak only for southern Alberta. I am not familiar with these huge areas. I look at some, and I see the one closest to us is Chinook. I'm just not familiar, and I would not be prepared to comment.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions of Ed? Yes, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Ed, I was wondering. In some of our other hearings we've talked about the concept of looking at the distinction between urban and rural and of looking at a weighted average formula to take into account the number of municipal districts, school boards, et cetera, that distinguish a rural from an urban MLA, of course population being one of the factors in a formula that could have a weighted average effect with the 25 percent variance working in. Do you think it's a feasibility, that we could distinguish enough items to put weighted averaging factors onto a formula that would actually distinguish an urban and a rural MLA?

MR. TORSHER: I believe that is the point, basically, that we were trying to get at in most of what we were addressing here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone from the audience? Okay. Thanks very much, Ed.

MR. TORSHER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next, Mayor Ted Grimm, city of Medicine Hat.

MR. GRIMM: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the panel. First of all, I want to clarify that I am not here to represent the provincial electors in the city of Medicine Hat, even though their boundaries happen to be coterminous in that sense. I'm here to make representation on behalf of the city of Medicine Hat, which has its own dealings with the provincial government. Perhaps you will have heard from various municipalities, including the rural and urban, in that context.

First of all, let me say on a personal note and from discussions at the council level that I didn't perceive any feeling that they're concerned about the issue of the Charter - that is a matter for the courts to decide - nor was there any sense of gross unfairness in the representation and the whole relationship within the province. So that's not what we're here for. I think we saw that changes are likely and imminent, and we wanted to make presentation on the basis of some guidance for your select committee and perhaps subsequently for a commission that might have to deal with the specifics.

First of all, I think we have some validity in being here in the

sense that our community is the fourth most populated in terms of electoral districts and eligible voters, and we feel it would be appropriate to consider some realignment. We want to also make it clear – and we support our counterparts from the rural areas – that we don't think the rural/urban mix is appropriate. We can elaborate on that.

People talk about fairness and unfairness in terms of population. It's not as simple as that. The representation a large municipality, for example, gets from having multiple numbers of MLAs is considerable. The relationship, for example, between the cities of Calgary and Edmonton and ourselves – it's fairly clear that if you put the rural analogy on it, when it comes to getting to the trough, they get there first and with more force than we do. On the other hand, ourselves as opposed to the rural population: while they may have more representation by population, we as a municipality certainly have more clout in terms of the kinds of staff we can muster for the representations we make to government, whether it is to the bureaucracy or to the MLAs and the ministries. So I guess what I'm saying is that it is not a simplistic formula that is going to solve it. I think you have to look at the social forces and the different elements of fairness in this whole formula.

I agree very strongly with the rural people who've spoken here today that a rural/urban mix would not be appropriate. For your guidance, then, the city council has presented a dividing line that might be at the Seven Persons Creek area, dividing the city of Medicine Hat into two electoral districts representing approximately 22,000 in the south, or in terms of electors, probably 16,000, although the formula is not that simple, and probably 14,000 in the north. We would not oppose the possibility of other realignments taking place. We would not oppose the possibility of Redcliff being combined with one of those districts, preferably the northern, if that is the kind of alignment that would be considered. We feel that the other alternative, combining us with the rural areas, is not appropriate. I think it would cause difficulty for the rural people, it would cause difficulty for us, and it would cause difficulties for the MLAs. That's really the essence of our point, and I know there's another opportunity for the specific representation. I want to clarify again that I'm not representing the electors here; I'm talking about it in terms of the municipality. We leave that other aspect to the partisan politicians, who are well represented.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Ted.

Questions from panel members?

MS BARRETT: Do you know either the voting population or the population of Redcliff, offhand?

MR. GRIMM: Well, I know the population is approximately 3,800 and roughly the same proportion. Ours represents about 75 percent electors to the total population.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

MR. SIGURDSON: Would it be at all acceptable, as the previous commission had to in the case of Red Deer, to go out into the county of Red Deer to try and find sufficient room? I mean, if the decision of the court is such that there has to be an equitable population in each constituency, I'm trying to find out the lesser of all evils. So I just open that up.

MR. GRIMM: I suppose there's always a possibility of considering an urban fringe that might be more populated and might have more in common with the urban area. There is some of that element. But you have to look at it in terms of the population density outside the various jurisdictions you might be looking at.

Certainly the expression I often use is that if you get outside the city of Medicine Hat, you could fire a cannon and you might not hit anything if you go in the right direction. So there is the kind of thing we're dealing with. We would have to take a very, very broad swath of land in order to maybe do some of the things we're contemplating – or at least suggested. I don't know what you people are thinking, the direction you're taking, but certainly there is speculation out there. That's one of the reasons we're here, and we're here rather late in the day because our resolution was only made last night.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; thank you. Anyone else? Okay. Thank you.

MR. GRIMM: Thanks very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll go on, then, to Wally Regehr, of the Medicine Hat New Democrats.

MR. REGEHR: As mentioned, my name is Wally Regehr, and I represent the Medicine Hat New Democrat Constituency Association. We've also had some input from the Cypress-Redcliff New Democrat Constituency Association. Although they haven't had an opportunity to ratify this position, they have also had some input into the points I'd like to raise.

What we've done is listed five points that maybe I'll just quickly review with you and then answer any questions you may have. Some of our points go beyond some of the issues that have been discussed this afternoon, but I still think they're worth dealing with.

Number one, we would concur with previous statements made that there is no justification whatsoever for increasing the number of seats in the Legislature. Given the kinds of provincial deficits and comparing us to other provinces in western Canada, in my view it would be very difficult politically and realistically to consider increasing the number of seats. So that's a given that we would support.

Item 2, on the principle of representation by population. There has been a lot of talk this afternoon about the need for a greater representation in the rural areas. We would submit that in a democracy such as ours there must be a strong commitment to representation by population. We would like to see that, obviously, on a one-to-one ratio, and 10 percent would be a marvelous ideal. We would support a variance of 25 percent, but I think even that variance has to be looked at carefully. Some of the topics that were discussed earlier: if you want to go to a variance of 25 percent, we would submit that it should be based on some good reasons such as accommodating the urban municipalities.

The other thing that I think is important to remember is that there are differences of growth. In Medicine Hat that's a significant thing. Depending on how you split the city, some areas of the city may grow dramatically quicker than others – I think we could predict that with some accuracy – and therefore that again would be justification to go to the 25 percent variance off the provincial mean. But I would want to stress that our position is that it's very, very important to not get beyond 25

percent. We recognize full well the problems that will cause in some rural ridings, but I think it's still very important that the integrity of the principle of representation by population be adhered to.

Item 3. We support, as most everybody has today, the concept of keeping a distinction between rural and urban ridings. I appreciate some of the comments that have been made already. I'm sure there are well-qualified MLAs who can represent both areas, but I think it's not only the job the MLA does but the way the voter perceives that job to have been done, and I think it would be very difficult for an MLA to try and represent both urban and rural people within the same riding. I think the inevitable result will be that the urban population will overpower the smaller rural portion of a constituency. So we would support maintaining pure urban and pure rural ridings.

Item 4 speaks very briefly to the makeup of the commission, and of course we would be interested in seeing a nonpartisan commission. If that's not possible, then what we're suggesting is that the Chief Electoral Officer, one representative appointed by the provincial government, and one representative appointed by the Official Opposition in consultation with other opposition parties would make up a reasonable commission. Three members: a small number, I admit, but I think a very workable commission that could do the very, very difficult job that lies ahead.

Item 5. We strongly support the idea that more public hearings be held. We would even go so far as to suggest that the commission visit the entire province once before any boundaries are drawn and once again after the tentative boundaries have been drawn, so there isn't the perception out there in the province that the commission will come back with a final boundary that cannot be changed. I think it would be important that another set of hearings be held after the first draft of the boundaries has taken place.

That's our submission. Thank you very much for allowing me the time. I'm interesting in responding to some questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Wally, for your well-thought-out brief.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just with respect to the fourth recommendation, where you look at the makeup of the commission with a small number, three or five, do you think there should be an added dimension or clause in there that assures that there's some rural representation?

MR. REGEHR: In my view the commission cannot possibly, no matter how big you make it, represent all facets of the population. I think we have to make sure the three people are people of integrity who can look at all issues, and therefore I would have a little bit of a worry about saying, "Yes, we need to make sure we have rural representation." Does that mean, then, we also say that we need to have large city representation, medium-sized city representation? You know, I think it's a problem. So I would rather be worried about the integrity of the individuals than trying to get some sort of balance on that committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for further clarification on that point. One of the things we learned when we were in Winnipeg was that the makeup of the commission in Manitoba consisted of a federal judge, the president of the University of Manitoba, and the Chief Electoral Officer. We understand that the Chief

Electoral Officer was not well at the time. All three were residents of the city of Winnipeg, and inadvertently some very grave errors were made in drawing boundaries between rural constituencies. When they did go through their hearings, there was a lot of concern because natural boundaries hadn't been considered properly. There were all kinds of concerns. So one of the feelings that was brought back by most if not all committee members, I think, was that some care should be taken to ensure that you've got a balance, that you have people with both urban and rural perspective.

MR. REGEHR: I guess I understand that, and I would sympathize with that point of view, but again I would assume – and I don't know how this commission will work – that there will be a good staff of civil servants who will be helping with this job.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But keep in mind that your good staff of civil servants lives in the capital city, so you want to have somebody who lives in the country, who knows country issues.

MR. REGEHR: I would submit that that's a valid point, but I still think it's a more important point that we have the integrity of the individuals and the integrity of the process of the public hearings if it's possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think you can do both.

MS BARRETT: He's trying to talk you into something, Wally, look out.

Let me just take this line of thought. I suspect also that what you're arguing is that if the commission does public hearings before it draws its initial boundaries, it would get an earful on what constitutes a natural boundary and where people shop and all the rest of that.

MR. REGEHR: It's my understanding that at this stage of the game we are recommending to this committee the kind of principles that the commission should follow, so that's what we've tried to do in our brief. Now, the next step will be that when that commission comes to Medicine Hat, they're going to get a lot of maps with funny little lines on them, so that's when the work really begins. I think there will be all kinds of input at that level. It will sort of counteract the problems that were discussed from Manitoba.

MS BARRETT: Right.

I was intrigued by the submission from Mayor Grimm, and I wonder if the NDP constituency association here discussed the boundaries at all. I realize we're not the boundaries commission, but do you have any ideas you wanted to let us know about?

MR. REGEHR: It's coincidental that a couple of days ago we discussed boundaries, for sure. Seven Persons Creek is a natural divider that runs through the city. That would work very nicely.

We would also like to take a look, at the time of the commission, of taking Redcliff. I think there's a good case to be made that Redcliff is an urban area. It's going to cause all kinds of difficulties when it comes to realigning other rural election territories, but I still think Redcliff could very nicely be part of Medicine Hat and the entire package split two ways. You could still use the Seven Persons Creek as a divider. You run into some difficulties if you want to stick to the 25 percent variance

theory, because then the south, according to my calculations at any rate, is about a thousand voters shy of the minimum. But again, that's the area of the city that is probably subject to the most growth. I think that would make a pretty nice package. We would have no difficulty at this stage of the game supporting that kind of a concept, but I would add to it that we would like to see Redcliff included in that, because I think so many people who work in Redcliff live in Medicine Hat. And the reverse: a lot of people live in Redcliff, work in Medicine Hat. It seems to be a very natural combination.

MS BARRETT: Looks like it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MS BARRETT: I think I have one more question. Oh, yes. Do you have a preference as to whether or not the commission and electoral boundaries are based upon population as a whole or upon number of electors?

MR. REGEHR: Quite frankly, it's a concept I hadn't thought about until it was brought up this afternoon. I don't have any major problems with it. I think it's a relevant issue in the rural areas where there are those populations like the Hutterites, for example, who in spite of their lack of desire to be on the enumeration list are still represented in the Legislature. Therefore, that might be a legitimate point to be made. I don't know without looking, you know, what impact that would have on city populations. I suspect that the ratio of voter to resident is lower than it would be in the city. So that's an important thing to keep in mind, but I would have no basic philosophical objection to that switch, especially in the interests of greater fairness in the rural areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any other questions? Okay. David Carter. You're here as an individual.

MR. CARTER: I don't want to scare the opposition members with that name.

MS BARRETT: We were looking for robes, we must admit.

MR. CARTER: I'm sorry to disappoint you.

I received notice of your visit, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I was the president of the local Liberal association, but I'm not any more. I'm the past president now, and I'm here primarily as a private citizen except for the fact that in anticipation of a provincial policy meeting this local constituency did pass a resolution urging upon our provincial party that they adopt a policy of not more than 15 percent over the average size for tolerance. Outside of that my comments are my own, and I appear just because I'm interested in politics and I'm a part-time political scientist.

I have an outline. I should have done it the way some of the others did, by summarizing the recommendations, but it's a bit of an outline, and I'll go through it as quickly as I can.

My first comment would be that if one examines the 1980 Act and the '83 amendments, it's my suggestion that the legislation was too restrictive with respect to the commission. It already laid out for the commission too many guidelines, it seems to me, and didn't give them the kind of flexibility that I would like to see in the legislation.

If I can move on to the next point, the composition of the

commission. It seems to me that the 1983 amendment, which made it three government people and one opposition person and removed the two and two structure, is understandable in the context of 75 government members and a total of four opposition members, but it doesn't make sense presently. If the commission is to stay political, then it ought to go back, I think, to the 1980 amendments. However, I join with my friend, Mr. Regehr. It's my view that the commission should be, first of all, smaller, and secondly, independent – most importantly, independent. I personally am of the view that more committee work should be done by members of the Legislature reviewing things like the heritage trust fund, the giving out of the lottery moneys, and so on. There are lots of issues to be looked at, but this isn't one.

It seems to me that one could argue fairly that, in some respects anyway, politicians sitting on a commission – not this committee but a commission – are almost to be seen in a conflict position. First of all, it's been successful elsewhere, including federally, in having small three-people commissions in each province and independent commissions, both in Canada and in Australia for example. Further, dealing with questions like whether the number of seats should be lowered or increased – I know at least one representation was made to you in Calgary that in drawing the boundaries, consideration ought to be given to where a sitting member lives. In my submission are two factors that bring into some question the independence, if you wish, of a commission that might look at that. I might add that those questions, particularly the point with respect to where the sitting member lives, should be an irrelevant consideration with respect to drawing the boundaries.

With respect to the principle of drawing the boundaries, first of all, it seems to me that we must move closer to equality. I think that's a point that certainly has been made quite clear by a number of the speakers, and the result is clearly going to be less numerical balance between the so-called rural and so-called urban seats. The Act, particularly after the 1983 amendments, clearly provides for some increased mixing of rural and urban ridings, at least outside of Calgary and Edmonton, but really it's only for the purpose of giving a little flexibility of numbers. It's not a principle; that's for sure. And I submit – and I'm sorry that Mr. Day had to leave – that it would be good in many ways to purposely mix rural and urban voters or types of communities, and I was very pleased to hear Mr. Day's personal view on how successful it had been in his area.

It seems to me that we should have more members that are not representing special interests – special or general, if you like – such as rural or urban interests or particular communities, but rather members of the provincial Legislature who are forced to take positions on regional matters who may therefore form a broader perspective and a need to balance the various pressures placed on them. With various local government lobby groups regularly making representations not just to their local MLAs but also to the cabinet and bureaucracy, it's difficult for me to see how communities can argue that they will not be heard. And if the role of an MLA is to be Ombudsman as well as to legislate, some mixing of rural and urban interests should not detract from his ability to be the Ombudsman and may actually improve his contribution as a legislator because of the broader view he may have on a selected number of topics.

It seems to me that in the Dixon case the object of the exercise in making any variation from close to absolute parity was that there be better government of the populace as a whole. It seems to me if you look at the kinds of provincial concerns

that we have, they are increasingly losing the demarcation between urban and rural. I note in particular that things like soil conservation, water supply and purity, and the environment generally seem to be concerns that city people are taking up with great regularity, while certainly a decade ago or 15 years ago those were big issues for the rural people primarily, it seems to me.

It seems to me that when you look at the whole issue of market centres, and again relating it perhaps to Medicine Hat, most of the Cypress-Redcliff constituency, for example, considers this city to be the place where they come to shop, to use some recreational facilities, the library – the Shortgrass library system; now we've got a regional library system – and, for a few, a school. The local chamber of commerce spends a great deal of its time trying to attract the interest of district businessmen in their organization. So I submit that rather than appearing to restrict the mixing of urban and rural to those instances where it's necessary to get urban ridings under some limit, 25 percent or otherwise, or to get rural ridings up to their average . . . And I couldn't understand the difference, frankly, when an earlier speaker said you couldn't put the urban into the rural but you could put the rural into the urban in order to get some balance. I missed the difference. But my submission is that what we should be doing here is permitting the joining of urban and rural ridings where the urban and adjoining rural areas provide an integrated or partly integrated economic or social unit. That is, rural areas can be joined with their market centre. In fact, it's widely done in the existing so-called rural areas. You've got places like Camrose and Wetaskiwin that can do it, and I guess it's a question of line drawing. Why can't it be done in places like Medicine Hat or Lethbridge? It's already done in Red Deer to some extent.

My point, then, is that I suggest that this be a consideration: that so-called rural ridings can come into and join with all or parts of cities and that it should be a factor – it shouldn't be a requirement that it be done, but it should be something that's permitted to be done. It's obviously been done in Red Deer, and it should be considered in more places.

The next issue is: what should be the tolerance? Well, I agree with my friend Mr. Regehr when he says that we should move toward zero. As I indicated, the local Liberal association proposed 15 percent for consideration. The question is: why 15 percent rather than 10 or rather than 25? I mean, it's just a number.

Maybe I can make an aside comment, just a note. I also had not considered in any detail the question of total population versus voter population, and I listened with interest to those who have suggested that the rural areas would benefit if Indian tribes, Hutterite colonies, Mennonite groups, and so on were taken into consideration. I want to suggest that my view would be that the people who would particularly benefit in terms of numbers would be the inner cities of Calgary and Edmonton. Surely there are large numbers of non-Canadians and recent immigrants and so on who are not qualified to vote or be registered to vote and who will be quick to register as soon as they are entitled to do so. I think it will skew it in favour of the large cities, frankly. I think it's a good idea, but it's going to be a little bit more difficult. Certainly the basis of your trip has been on the basis of votes. I don't really know what the population numbers are throughout the province without that information.

Getting back to why 15 percent. While the Act in section 14 allows for projected growth, it could be eight to 10 years

between redistribution, and projections aside, the practical result that can be expected is that before the exercise is next undertaken, the actual numbers in a few constituencies will well exceed 15 percent, if you use 15 percent as a tolerance. It's probably going to be, in many instances, 25 or more. And if we start at 25, the practical result is that by the second general election we'll be well over 25 percent again in a lot of constituencies. So why start behind the eight ball, so to speak? Australia permits 10 percent federally, and certainly there are great contrasts between the big cities in the east and the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Now, in her decision Madam Justice McLachlin suggested that Saskatchewan has a tolerance of 15 percent provincially. I understand that may be an error; I didn't double-check it. I trusted her until I spoke to Mr. Bruseker at lunch. Certainly there are other examples where something lower than 25 percent has been tolerated.

The other point is that in Dixon, Madam Justice McLachlin said that "equality of voting power is the single most important factor," and "only those deviations" which demonstrably "contribute to better government of the populace as a whole" should be permitted – not better government to one small hamlet or one rural municipality or one community group in a city but the province as a whole.

What Madam Justice McLachlin also said is that at the time of the Charter it did not grant to us more rights or more privileges under section 3 – that is, make it absolutely one man, one vote – and that in fact we have a history of some deviation from that. I want to suggest that she didn't go quite far enough though. Because while it's true that an absolute one man, one vote is not part of our electoral history yet, at the same time the history of liberal democracy and our democracy in Canada is one of an evolution toward greater fairness and equity in the franchise. If we were to go back far enough in this country, we'd see that we had very stringent property requirements which over time were lowered. It's not that long ago that women were extended the franchise in various provinces or even a shorter time ago that we extended it to 18 from 21. So it's my suggestion that the move to equity is part of the history of the granting of the vote. There's nothing magic or particular that should freeze the move in that way. That is, the Charter should not freeze progress in the same way as it may not necessarily push it forward automatically.

Also as part of this suggestion that the move is towards more equality, I'm sure you've been made aware of an article in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* from December of 1988 by Professor John Courtney. It's entitled "Parliament and Representation: The Unfinished Agenda of Electoral Redistributions." John Courtney is a professor at the U of S, and he has been on the three-person federal redistribution committee for Saskatchewan. He noted that while in the federal redistribution process there are some difficulties – for example, interprovincial inequities which are in part historical in nature, and you've made some reference to them earlier; no less than the number of Senators, for example, in P.E.I. – in fact, the independent commissions within the provinces are moving more and more towards a degree of population equity. The Saskatchewan 1987 report said that the federal ridings had to be plus or minus 5 percent of the province's mean population, and Saskatchewan is not all that much different from this province, particularly in its northern extremities.

Finally under this category, I think it may be a subtle message, but surely the moving to equity in terms of the right to vote is a message to all Albertans that they're equal, that they've got an

equal voice and an equal stake in this province. I think it's an important message. While we recognize that there's some flexibility required, not all square pegs fit into round holes. This is particularly true in the extreme north; not, I submit, in the south, where the roads are better than in the north, where the weather is somewhat less severe, and where the communication services to remote areas are not as lacking as they might be in the extreme north. So there may be some consideration, as there is in the federal, for maybe as much as five ridings in the north that might deviate even more.

I want to join again with some of the other speakers and suggest that the seats will be larger in the redistribution, not more seats, certainly not the 10 to 12 seats that were proposed at least once to this committee, and I'll be specific. I think the executive of the Alberta Liberal Party suggested the possibility of as many as 10 to 12 more seats. I don't think it's palatable. I don't think there are very many people in this province that want to see it, particularly at this time when we're still trying to survive the controversy of the pay raise. If government is going to continue to have its necessary legitimacy, it must have some respect for the need and, I think, the overwhelming call for restraint in government, and bigger is not better.

Moving specifically to Medicine Hat, and I recognize that this is somewhat outside the mandate specifically of this committee, it seems to me that there are three choices. Well, there are four actually. The second choice of the town of Bow Island was certainly one where basically the city kept to itself and they changed the lower eight to six. But I submit that there are three other alternatives. One is to make two ridings out of Medicine Hat, one urban – and I appreciate that I'm taking more of my share of time or I would put up the map and show where the riding would go. But, basically, it's along the Seven Persons Creek, then along the Trans-Canada, along the river, and back over to the west/east boundaries of the city of Medicine Hat. That would have about 21,000 or so voters: 20,600. You could take the north side of the river and all of Cypress-Redcliff with the exception of that part that's in the municipal district of Taber, which is 650 voters, and you could call it whatever you want: Cypress-Medicine Hat, Cypress-Red Hat. You'd have about 19,000 voters and about an even split between rural and urban. This is as opposed to taking a huge area around Medicine Hat and making a rural seat that would be humongous; in other words, the existing Cypress-Redcliff plus all of some other riding – Little Bow, part of Chinook, or whatever.

We don't accept that a rural riding such as Cypress-Redcliff with 8,900 voters is harder to service than Medicine Hat at 29,000 voters: different, yes; harder, not necessarily. I can appreciate that the member might have a challenging task, but for the reasons I indicated earlier, I think that's appropriate. There are a couple of ways in which I think we can help. They've been referred to a little bit already. One is the communications idea: disparate allowances for members' telephone, facsimile, or constituency office expenses, which in some instances are already accepted in principle, based, for example, on the number of councils or groups in the area that you have to service. More use of facsimile or other services: you could arrange with a local business to receive things of a nonconfidential nature in rural constituencies and see that it gets quickly into the hands of a constituent. Better rationalization perhaps of AGT long-distance calling zones or the use of WATS lines would be appropriate.

One of the major problems is in campaigning, and it seems to me that given the area that has to be covered in some instances

and the necessary resort to weekly rather than daily publications, the period in the Election Act has to be expanded from 30 days to 45 days. Certainly if they're going to keep Medicine Hat with 30,000 voters, the 30-day period is simply too short.

There are obviously another couple of options. One is two ridings, partially urban, partially rural, so that you'd have two members that would have a similar rural/urban mix and then neither would feel particularly hard done by. Again, we could draw boundaries and lines; there's not the time for that. Frankly, from a practical point of view it might be appropriate to create one large riding containing all of Medicine Hat and all of Cypress-Redcliff and make it a two-member riding. I'm not in favour of that personally, but it's certainly another solution. It's not a solution for the entire province, but it might be a good solution for this area.

In conclusion, the legislation should be more flexible with respect to mixing urban and rural areas, at least outside the two larger cities. We should be less tolerant to deviations from average size. The lines should be applied by an independent commission. While there are a variety of options for this area, Cypress-Redcliff could be tied in to Medicine Hat first of all in order to reflect market forces; secondly, to keep the people in Cypress-Redcliff in a manageably sized riding with some common connector; and thirdly, to give the voters of Medicine Hat a fair voice with respect to the need for a larger number of seats in the Legislature.

In response to a point made earlier by another lawyer who appeared, I see absolutely no need for referring any scheme to the Court of Appeal. The Dixon case made the point very clearly as to what might be permissible. If the scheme is drawn on defensible principles, then the Legislature can act, and surely the guidance of that case is clear enough to allow us to do that without sending it off to the Court of Appeal for their imprimatur.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, David.

Questions from the committee or anyone present? Okay. Thank you.

Ken.

MR. GRAUMANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Ken Graumans. I am here as an individual, but I have to admit that I also belong to a general farm organization. We also have been taking a few notes, and probably we're going to present a brief early in the new year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; good.

MR. GRAUMANS: Mr. Chairman, committee members, recognizing the philosophy of fair representation, nevertheless as a voter in the Cypress-Redcliff constituency and a farmer, I would like to voice some concerns I have about the proposed electoral boundary changes. First, my main concern is that as a rural voter I will lose access to my MLA because the distance will increase and so lessen the availability of contact with my MLA. The MLA will also be at a disadvantage because he or she won't have the same contact with the voter. This is already a problem in some areas.

Two, agriculture is still the number one industry in the province. It is, as you know, an extremely complex and diversified industry with problems that are as diverse and complex as the industry itself. I feel as a farmer that access to government

is essential. I don't feel that a representative from a more urban setting would have the understanding of the problems facing agriculture today. A few examples are the GATT negotiations, free trade, weather modification, method of payment in our stabilization programs, to name a few.

These are just a few concerns I raise at this time. Thank you for your attention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ken.
Questions? Pam and then Tom.

MS BARRETT: Sure. I just want to ask you a little bit about access to your MLA. Do you ever find that you use the RITE line to phone your MLA?

MR. GRAUMANS: Yeah, we have that opportunity. But still I think it was previously stated here too, you know, that the personal contact is going to be missing. I think there is quite a distinct difference between a phone call and personal contact. I'm even thinking of when election time comes around. We don't see any knocking at the door.

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. GRAUMANS: That's just one example, but there are other issues where the rural areas are at a disadvantage compared to the urban areas.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm not so sure about that. If I've got thousands of people lined up at the door, you know, it might take me as long to see them as it would for a rural MLA to see you.

Let me ask you: how often in a year do you like to have personal contact with your MLA? That's assuming you have no problems you need to phone about.

MR. GRAUMANS: I think at least once or maybe twice a year. If the assumptions I've heard here today are going to go through, you know, if I've got to start traveling 60 or 70 kilometres to attend a meeting or for the MLA to come to my place, I think that's kind of unfair, because you can go to any urban area and go 10 kilometres and it's just about across. That is the kind of concern we have as farmers.

MS BARRETT: How far do you currently have to drive to see your MLA?

MR. GRAUMANS: Well, 30 kilometres.

MS BARRETT: Thirty kilometres. Okay, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: No, my point was made, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?
Thanks very much, Ken.

MR. GRAUMANS: You're welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, members.

Now, I think there's a representative here from the MD of Cypress. Is that right? Would you like to come forward, sir?

Is there anyone else who has a brief they'd like to give? Okay. Would you like to come up? I don't have any other names on my list, but please come up and join us.

MR. PERSCHON: Oh, I'm all alone. Oh, my goodness. I feel all alone.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there anyone else who has a brief to give, either verbal or written? Come on up, please.

MR. PERSCHON: I won't take the time to read this submission, because you can read as well as I can. It is probably restating some of the arguments you have heard already. However, just let me paraphrase the major points. First of all, we feel that the court case in B.C. was not necessarily a good determination of equality in the sense that in a country like Canada equality is not necessarily measured by numbers of people. In this particular case the Charter was used. It appears to us that up to now the Charter has been used to protect minority rights, not to protect the majority against the minority. It's there for that reason as well; I don't want to preclude that. But we're submitting that there are other reasons for having an unequal, necessarily by number vote. One of the points we make is that the rural perspective could be disfranchised if the number of urban members becomes so large that none of the rural issues could, in fact, be voted through. I take your comment earlier, by the way, that everyone kind of looks after agricultural issues because they feel they are important. However, when it comes right down to the crunch, we wonder where that will fly.

Secondly, I guess we kind of support the speaker from the county of Newell in that it seems somewhat odd that in Alberta, where we've been fighting for regional representation, we're now looking at something which would, in fact, go the opposite direction. It's interesting, by the way, and I note in my brief, that the MD of Cypress, which is a large area in itself and is very sparsely populated - we have less than one person per square mile within the municipality - set up an independent committee before the elections when we incorporated and gave them the 25 percent variance as a guideline. The independent committee could not come up with a recommendation that they felt was palatable with the 25 percent guidelines, because some of the areas would become so large as to be really disadvantaged in that sense that they could be representing diverse or different interests. So some of the electoral divisions within the MD of Cypress now are outside those 25 percent guidelines. So it doesn't always work.

To speak briefly to the current Act, we at the MD of Cypress favour Dan Smith's submission somewhat, where we talk about the blended ridings. It's interesting, for instance, that the town of Bow Island is seen as a rural municipality. In actual fact we see that as an urban municipality from a rural perspective, but I guess within Alberta under the Election Act we basically talk about cities and talk about other rural areas, and small towns are grouped into the rural kind of idea. To us it shows that urbanized interests and rural interests can live together. The first position of the MD of Cypress is that things remain as they are. If that isn't possible, then we favour the idea of a blended rural/urban mix where the population of the urban component does not exceed 50 percent. Now, somebody asked earlier, "Is that fair? You say you can't have more than a 50 percent urban component. Why can't it cut both ways?" The reason we feel it can't cut both ways is because the shift of this whole study is

because of the trend of the population going urban, so what we're concerned with is the shift of power from one to the other. So to retain the balance, if you can't keep 43 urban ridings and 42 rural ridings, our position is that 12 half rural ridings are better than six total rural ridings gone urban type of thing, because there's at least a mixed perspective. I think Mr. Day enunciated the fact that it has worked, and at least the people begin to understand both sides and have that to represent.

Finally, we conclude by saying that the current Act tries to deal with equity within the large urban ridings – in other words, make the population within those divisions equal – and tries to equalize the population within the rural divisions. We think that's a meaningful and fair sort of goal to try to attain. To try to attain equity between urban and rural may not work in a country as vast as Canada, in a province as vast as Alberta, in order for the rural interests to be properly protected.

I take Mayor Grimm's comment earlier that the cities already have a fairly strong power base in the fact that they have three, four, or five MLAs to vote their collective perspective. So from that point, we feel that to try for equity between rural and urban is not necessarily as important as having equity amongst rural and equity amongst urban even though the two may not be the same in numbers. That's basically our submission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Tom and Frank.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

We've seen over the last number of years the crisis of rural depopulation and increased urbanization. Currently our province is two-thirds urbanites, I suppose, and one-third are still living in the large rural part of our province, and yet the seats are still pretty much 50-50. There's a one seat difference between rural and urban. If we continue along the lines we've been going and we see increased depopulation in rural Alberta, at what point do legislators or those who sit on a commission start making the representation in urban areas effective so there are not constituencies of 30,000 versus constituencies of 8,000?

MR. PERSCHON: Well, the implication there is that to do so means there's something wrong, and at this point I haven't seen that. That is to say, someone said there is an inequity – this particular court case to be exact – but I don't see where Alberta has suffered as a province. I don't see where urbanites or others have suffered from that particular imbalance. So from that perspective, I submit that if the urban interest, as you have indicated, can look after the rural interest, is it not also true in the converse? I don't necessarily think that at this point it's a critical sort of issue that requires some immediate solution.

MR. SIGURDSON: Then you don't see any point coming down the pike where you think the proportion of urban population to rural population would cause you to make a change in legislative representation?

MR. PERSCHON: I can't say that. That's true. I mean, at some point the disparity may become so acute that in order . . . I think we recognize that representational democracy is based on a numbers situation. I suppose at some point you could no longer argue that, but at this particular point I don't think that's a critical enough situation in variance, nor do I think the province is suffering from that situation. I guess the question I ask back is: how do you retain the regional interest, if you

would? How do you keep the Quebecs and Ontarios from causing the demise of the nonpopulated areas, which we've seen . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: I would argue you do it through Executive Council. You do it through cabinet of government. The representation at cabinet, I believe, certainly has to be representative of the regions of our province.

MR. PERSCHON: Would you legislate that?

MR. SIGURDSON: I don't know if that would be possible, because there may very well be occasions as we had in the federal situation, where there were no Liberals elected west of the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border and they had to pull people from the Senate into the cabinet for representation. But given that certain constituencies elect members – Edmonton has only two Progressive Conservative members; both are in the cabinet for that representation. The cabinet maker makes a cabinet with the material he or she has, and I would hope any good cabinet maker would use the best available material.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Perschon, I just want to ask you about the urban/rural combined constituency a little bit and the concern you and others have addressed about the need for representation for those in the agriculture sector. I'm wondering – and Medicine Hat seems to me to be a natural, but maybe that's just my own bias – what about around the cities of Edmonton and Calgary? Do you think, as Mr. Day pointed out, that urban/rural constituencies might help if they could maintain your concept, which is an equal distribution? Say it's a 20,000-member constituency and you have 10,000 in a rural area and 10,000 in an urban area. Do you think that applied widely across the province that might be an advantage for agriculture representation in the Legislature?

MR. PERSCHON: I believe so, yes. I believe it can. I know earlier it was said that you can do a lot more door-knocking in a confined urban sort of setting, but I also know that the rural areas can be very politically active if they choose to be. So I guess it's a point of voter interest rather than apathy. In fact, I would say that percentage-wise it's better in rural areas than in urban areas.

MS BARRETT: I think you're right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?
Thanks very much then, Lutz.

MR. PERSCHON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ted, are you here as an individual or representing a group?

MR. T. HERMAN: As an individual. Mr. Chairman, I had no intention of presenting a brief, but I do want to make a few comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let the record show Ted Herman.

MR. T. HERMAN: Introducing myself, I'm a retired farmer,

and I've seen the decline of the farm population. I've seen these things happen right down through the years. Now, sometimes progress is not progress. However, let that be as it may.

I see two threads running through this whole discussion and presentation today. One is philosophical, or perhaps better said, compassionate logic. When I say that, I'm simply saying that I cannot see how you're going to take 10 percent, 20 percent, or whatever and apply it to a rural area. I don't think you're going to be able to do that. Therefore, I think you people are going to be charged with having compassionate logic versus the other line that's running through this, which is the legalistic view or the numbers you're given. I think this is where you people are going to have to be flexible. We've heard a lot about flexibility too. But I think you're going to be charged with the proposition of sitting down and looking at each constituency and saying there's so many . . . We're talking kilometres and I'm still used to miles, and maybe I'll never be any different, but that's where I rest. Anyway, we're going to have to compare the ability for an MLA to represent and be accessible and all those good things we've heard today.

So I think we've got these two things. You're going to have to consider compassionate logic versus logistics or legalism, the legality that's been set up for you.

I wish you well, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Ted.

We have one other brief that was submitted, and I'm going to ask Pam Barrett to read it into the record so everyone can hear the brief.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

It's dated December 11, 1989, and Sitting in Medicine Hat, Alberta, to Receive Public Input is its title.

Mr. Bogle,

Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee. As a resident of Medicine Hat Provincial Constituency, I must say I feel neglected as the fourth largest riding in the Province with 29,589 constituents, which is 58% more constituents than the average of 18,685 Electors on average per Electoral Division.

Something has got to be done and done before the next election if we in this riding are to get proportional representation, the cornerstone of our democratic society and an idea which apparently Mr. Horsman has fought valiantly for at the federal level. The number of electors in this riding is fully 20,654 more than our neighbouring riding of Cypress-Redcliff or 331% greater.

I believe that no constituency is more important than another, therefore I would urge the Legislature to consider balancing all ridings to within 15-20% of average per Electoral Division.

Clearly, the move of our citizenry from rural Alberta to the metropolitan areas is a known phenomena. Why then do we support a system of representation which favours rural Alberta over the needs of those in towns and cities? Yes, rural concerns are important and deserve the attention of an M.L.A. whose expertise and knowledge reflect rural Alberta. It makes little sense to combine rural and urban constituencies just . . .

That's underlined.

. . . to balance the numbers.

I urge a more balanced representation such as the example outlined below in this part of the Province. Consolidate the present Southeastern corner of rural Alberta by merging Cypress-Redcliff with Chinook excluding the Town of Redcliff (total-18,132 less Redcliff town of roughly 2,692 equals 15,440); and divide the present Medicine Hat riding into two with the S. Saskatchewan River as the rough dividing line including Redcliff town in N. Medicine Hat, resulting in 29,589 divided by two or 14,795 plus half of Redcliff (2,692) or 1,346 to equal 16,141 electors in each of the Medicine Hat ridings. The percentage difference is 17% less in Redcliff/Cypress/Chinook and 14% less in Medicine Hat. Another merger and rationalization of the rural vote could include Cypress-Redcliff and part of Bow Valley with the balance of Bow Valley going with Chinook.

These proposals also satisfy the goal not to increase or decrease the total number of M.L.A.'s in the Province from the present 83. This in my view should be an overriding goal of any Committee charged with changing Electoral Boundaries.

Thank you again for your time and attention, Honourable ladies and gentlemen. I hope you can get cooking on these long overdue changes just as quickly as can be.

Respectfully submitted . . .

On recycled paper, I note.

Jim Ridley

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Last call. Are there any further briefs from the floor? Well, with that, on behalf of the committee, a very special thank you to residents of Medicine Hat and southeastern Alberta for making this not only the best attended but also the hearing where we've received more briefs than in any other, including our cities of Calgary and Edmonton.

MS BARRETT: Hear, hear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So thank you very much for your help and input.

[The committee adjourned at 3:55 p.m.]