

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[7:05 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to welcome you to the Red Deer hearing for the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. This is the first of the committee hearings held in the new year. This meeting will be followed up by meetings in Hanna, Lethbridge, Cardston, Pincher Creek, St. Paul, Viking, Donnelly, Slave Lake, Edmonton, and possibly other communities, depending on demand.

I would like to at this time briefly introduce the members of our committee. Then I will explain the parameters under which we're operating. We'll then, through Bob Pritchard, our senior administrator, invite the first six participants to come forward.

First of all, the members of our panel. On my immediate left, the vice-chairman of the committee, the MLA for Red Deer-North, also the government Whip, Stockwell Day. Seated next to Stockwell is Tom Sigurdson. Tom is a New Democrat member of the Assembly representing Edmonton-Belmont. On my far left is an honorary member of our committee, and we're very fortunate to have a man with the talents that this gentleman brings. He is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province, Mr. Pat Ledgerwood. Going down, then, to my immediate right, Frank Bruseker, a Liberal member of the Assembly for Calgary-North West. Seated next to Frank is Pam Barrett, the House leader for the New Democratic Party and Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

Because of the number of people who are here, we're going to skip going through the introductions of everyone present other than members of the Assembly. I think they should be recognized. Ron Moore from Lacombe. I saw Ron. There he is. We're pleased to have you with us. Gary Severtson from Innisfail. Gary. If any others come in a bit later, we'll acknowledge them as well.

The parameters for the committee. As I'm sure you're all aware, this is not the commission. We are not actually drawing lines between boundaries. We are here because of a court case in British Columbia in which the ground rules followed in British Columbia were successfully challenged in the courts. Because of that the three political parties represented in the Alberta Legislature got together and decided there should be a committee that would look at our historical practices in Alberta, would look at the Charter of Rights and its implication on what we've been doing up until now, would try to come up with a new set of parameters for our Electoral Boundaries Commission. It is our intent, after we've heard from all those who are interested in presenting briefs to us, to make our recommendations back to the Assembly. It would then be up to the Legislature to set the parameters for an Electoral Boundaries Commission, and the commission in turn would go out to do the detailed map-drawing. So if any of you have sections in your brief which deal with where a boundary should be between two constituencies, we'll assure you that that information will be passed on to the commission when the commission is struck, but that isn't really the work, the role, of our committee. So that won't be part of what we're doing.

I would at this time like to turn to the vice-chairman of our committee, the MLA for Red Deer-North, and ask him to make some opening comments on the background of why we're here and also to lead us through the slides we have for you that will help give you some of the statistics we're looking at in this process. You'll see in these slides, when we look at using a total population base rather than just an elector base, how an idea which first came from people at some of the first hearings we

had was picked up on by Tom and others and how that idea in itself might help us with part – not all but part – of the solution to this situation. So I'm happy to turn it over to you, Stock.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, ladies and gentlemen. It's encouraging to see the good number who are out tonight. I think it's indicative of folks in Red Deer and, actually, throughout central Alberta that we like to think of ourselves as keen about the issues and showing real concern about the issues. Certainly that's reflected tonight. So thanks for your turnout. I know that a lot of you have been working hard and preparing your thoughts on this.

The chairman has given the background in terms of why we're here: to hear from you and compile a report basically based from those remarks. He's also touched on the court case in British Columbia, which is driving with a little more interest this electoral boundary review. This process takes place and takes part as a normal part of the electoral process in Alberta, but this time there's just some extra weight on it given the fact that there seems to be some guidelines coming out in terms of constituency sizes and population. We know that we're concerned about fair and equitable representation, and that's what this presentation is all about.

I'm going to move directly to the slides. The chairman wouldn't let me bring my slides on my family summer vacation this year, so we're going to have to go directly to these ones, which are a little drier. You can follow along if you've picked up your package that's placed for you on the table there.

This slide simply indicates for you the eligible voters as at 1989 in each constituency. So those of you who are either from Red Deer-North or Red Deer-South or Lacombe, Innisfail, Rocky Mountain House: you can find yourself on that list and see how many eligible voters are actually in your constituency.

Now, basically you take all 83 constituencies. That gives you about 1.5 million people, roughly. Divide that by 83. The math on this isn't too advanced; it's enough that I can grasp, so it probably won't go over any of your heads, because you're ahead of me. You divide 83 into 1.5 million, and you get an average number per constituency. As you can see on the sheet here, the average, as laid out, is about 18,685. Now, the guidelines suggested by the court ruling in British Columbia indicate that you could have, according to those guidelines, a constituency with as much as 25 percent above that 18,000 or 25 percent below that 18,000 and you would still be giving electors fair representation. In other words, large constituencies wouldn't be outweighing smaller constituencies in terms of their vote in the Legislature.

When you look at this slide, the constituencies are listed now according to size. On the other page it was in alphabetical order. The constituencies that are shaded in green indicate the number that are at present in excess of the 25 percent guideline. The ones in pink or mauve or chartreuse – or however you see that – those that are shaded there represent constituencies that presently fall below the 25 percent allowance that has been indicated. That's what it looks like on that slide.

Now I'd like you to see it on a map of Alberta, just to give you an idea. There's Alberta; there are the constituencies divided. Every one you see in pink is actually an indication that as at 1989, using eligible voters as the guideline, those constituencies all are less than the 25 percent guideline. In other words, take your 18,000, allow 25 percent below that; these ones are even below that guideline.

We'll flip to the next one. We can see the city of Calgary.

These are the constituencies in the city of Calgary. The ones in green indicate the constituencies that have more than that 25 percent allowance. So they're in excess. That just gives you a quick snapshot of what Calgary looks like.

Edmonton. There you can see it. The ones in green: those constituencies are in excess; they exceed the 25 percent allowance.

The city of Lethbridge is within the guidelines and divided into two constituencies at present.

This just gives you a shot of the urban situation.

The city of Medicine Hat is shaded in green because it is in excess of that 25 percent guideline.

The city of Red Deer. Now, those of us from Red Deer feel we are unique. I know that those of you from Lacombe feel you're unique also, but there's a uniqueness to Red Deer which we just wanted to show here. Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South are the two municipal constituencies in the province whose boundaries also include rural area. In other words, the boundaries of Red Deer-North bypass the municipal boundaries and take in the rural area, and it's the same in Red Deer-South. As far as the population, it's almost exactly on the 18,000-average mark.

The city of St. Albert, in green, also indicating that it is in excess of that 25 percent figure.

Now, the ones in purple. Again, just to give you an idea here, these constituencies represent the fact that they are actually more than 35 percent below that guideline. Okay? We showed all the green. That was all the ones 25 percent. These ones are more than 25 percent; in fact, they're more than 35 percent below that guideline.

These constituencies down here in the southern part of our province are actually in excess of 50 percent below that guideline. Again, just to give you a snapshot and an idea here.

Just to indicate the challenge we have, we feel it important, and we have felt over the last few months, to get to as many areas as possible. Obviously, we can't get to 83 separate constituencies, but we've tried to spread our hearings throughout the province. That gives you an idea of where we've been and a few that we have yet to attend. There is the agenda for the remainder of this month in terms of the meetings we have yet to cover, and you can see where we've been already. That's just written out for you.

This shows you the areas that are most drastically affected. We have tried to hit those areas maybe a little more substantially than the others. You can see that the meetings have taken place, significantly, around those constituencies, most of which are larger constituencies, and we're trying to cut down the travel time for people to get to the various meetings.

Now, there are two figures listed here. The figures that we've been using in terms of defining what the average number in every constituency is are figures based on enumeration. That means eligible voters. But different jurisdictions look at it differently. Some use a figure of eligible voters; others just use the figures in terms of population. Let me explain that. For instance, you need to be a citizen to vote. There could be large numbers of people in a particular constituency who are not citizens and, therefore, are not able to vote. There are situations – as an example, a Hutterite colony or perhaps reserves – where there are people who for various reasons do not register to vote, so they're not included in enumeration figures, but in fact they are part of the workload and the representation of the MLA. They have concerns; they bring those concerns; they have areas of need that need to be met. So when you throw in

population figures, the averages do change somewhat. As a matter of fact, when you just look at enumeration, the average constituency size is indicated at 18,000 and change. When you look at it in population, the average comes out to 28,000. So you can see there's a difference there. That's something that has been addressed at various meetings and something we've been asked to look at: to do a comparison and see what the differences would be.

Now, we don't have the other one side by side to see it, so you may not be able to recall, but this shows your average constituency size differences. When we use population figures, it does change the picture somewhat. Again, the green would be those that are in excess of the 25 percent guideline when we're using population figures and an average of 28,000 people. Is everybody with me on that? Okay, great. Again, the pink. Using population figures this time rather than enumeration and that average of 28,000 shows that these ones in pink are below the provincial average. And there's your snapshot. Bob, if you could just help me with that – the green are above, and the pink are below. Okay?

MR. PRITCHARD: Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie, Stock.

MR. DAY: Yeah. This is the picture in the cities. Again, if you don't have a photographic memory and can't remember what it looked like when we showed you the other Calgary slide, it still shows some differences, not quite as extreme. Edmonton, the same, and there are your differences in terms of the 35 percent. Is that correct?

MR. PRITCHARD: That's right.

MR. DAY: Remember, there were more that were lower than that, that were in excess of the 35 percent when we use enumeration figures. Using population figures, it's not quite as dramatic.

MR. PRITCHARD: Minus 50.

MR. DAY: Okay. Here we go. If you look at the bottom – remember there was a number of them that exceeded the minus 50 percent, and now again it changes, using total population figures. Just as an example for you, in the constituency of Cardston there's a difference of about 1,800 because of the Blood Indian Reserve there. They choose not to register, so that's about 1,800 in terms of registered voters. That's a difference of 1,800, which is quite significant, and then you pull in the population figure, and it changes the picture somewhat. Is that all our pictures there, Bob?

MR. PRITCHARD: That's it. We have one last one: people attending our public hearings. A hundred and thirty-six have attended so far, and we have 52 written submissions to date.

MR. DAY: Great.

Okay, back to you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much. Now, the reason we went through the two sets of slides was to show you that one of the things we're trying to do as a committee is to learn from people, learn how we can tackle this issue and come out of it with something that people can live with within Alberta. By going from a voters' list to a total population base, while that

doesn't completely solve the problem, you can see that it certainly helps, because rural families are slightly larger than urban families, and so the rural areas do benefit somewhat.

Before proceeding, I want to introduce another colleague who has come in, Ty Lund, the MLA for Rocky Mountain House. Glad to have you with us, Ty.

Okay. In a moment Bob Pritchard is going to call up the first six individuals who got their names on the list, and that's the order in which we'll proceed through the hearings tonight. I want to emphasize something before he does that though. We don't want anybody to be intimidated by these microphones. Because this is a select committee of the Legislature, there is a copy of *Hansard*, which is available to the public at the end. Therefore, everything that's said during the meeting is recorded. We've tried very hard to keep our meetings as informal as possible. The process we follow is that we'll invite the first six participants forward. The first person to make a presentation will do so. We'll then ask panel members if they have any questions or comments they wish to make, if there's anything really pressing that anyone else feels needs to be added to it, and then we'll proceed on with numbers two, three, four, and so on. When the six have completed their presentations, they'll go back to their regular seats, and the next six will come forward. In that way we'll try to deal with everyone this evening. We're prepared to stay here a little later tonight in order to accommodate you, and we hope we can do that in a way that meets your scheduling as well as our own. So if there are no other questions of what we're doing or why we're doing it, we'll proceed.

Yes, sir?

MR. ALTON: Mr. Chairman, will there be other meetings in other locations? I'm from Stettler, and we're just writing a few letters.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. We're in Hanna tomorrow, and we're in Viking - what's the date? - February 13.

MR. ALTON: In addition to that, are there going to be other meetings?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Actually, we have meetings in Stand Off, Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, St. Paul, and Viking. Robin will give you a list of the locations.

MR. ALTON: Other than the scheduled meetings. In eastern central Alberta are we going to have some further meetings?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If we find a significant demand, we've tried to this point in time to respond to it. As you can tell by the map, we've scheduled meetings across the province. Some meetings have been very sparsely attended. This is the best-attended meeting we've had to date, and we're really pleased about it.

MR. ALTON: I came in late. How many submissions do we have this evening?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the number now, Bob?

MR. PRITCHARD: How many have we received by mail?

MR. ALTON: No. How many this evening?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. How many for tonight?

MR. PRITCHARD: We have 25 people presenting tonight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Ron.

MR. MOORE: If by chance we can't hear all the presenters tonight, will you come back to Red Deer at a later date? Is that a possibility?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We as a committee will certainly ensure that those who are here tonight and wish to make briefs will be heard. Now, if we find that the people we're not able to accommodate tonight are primarily from a community other than Red Deer, we would in all likelihood go to that community. We don't intend to advertise another hearing, but on the other hand those who have made the effort to come out are going to be heard, and if it can't be done tonight, if we run out of time, we'll find a time when we can come back into the region. Okay?

I think what we'll do, Bob: once we get started with the first six, I'd like you to start analyzing the list of 25 - I didn't realize we had 25; I thought we had 18 - so we can see if there is a community of interest.

Okay, let's proceed with the first six.

MR. PRITCHARD: The first six names are Mayor Judy Gordon, Mr. Gerald Kujala, Reeve Larry Waud, Rod McDermant, Allan Charles, and as the seventh we'll have George Visser, because I believe Allan and George are together. Is that correct? If you'd like to just come up and take chairs here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And while they're doing that, I'm pleased to introduce Halvar Jonson, MLA for Ponoka, who's just joined us.

Okay, Judy, as soon as you're ready.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you. Mr. Chairman and members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, on behalf of the council of the town of Lacombe I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to present our position on the issue of electoral boundaries and the possibility of significant change in the representation of the citizens of Alberta in their provincial government.

Our constituency of Lacombe is one of those which has the number of eligible voters falling below 75 percent of the average electors per riding. The prospect of having our constituency markedly enlarged or ultimately eliminated is of significant concern to my council and, I believe, to the constituents of Lacombe.

The electoral boundary review process is of prime importance to all Albertans, and it is the obvious goal of all to achieve the fairest system of representation for this province's citizens. We believe that the determination of appropriate constituency boundaries must not be based solely on population but rather must also give strong consideration to two fundamental requirements: (a) the ability of Members of the Legislative Assembly to adequately and effectively represent voters in a constituency containing a large geographic area and a number of differing communities, (b) the maintenance of an effective balance between the interests of more populous urban areas and the differing interests of a diverse and geographically dispersed rural Alberta.

While an urban constituency in Alberta invariably encompasses

ses more electors, its area is much more compact and uniform in development. The social, economic, and demographic characteristics of its citizens are generally homogeneous, and the interests of the electorate are widely held in common. For a rural MLA the situation is much more difficult. A member is required to deal with a large geographic area, a number of different communities within that area, and a population that is very diverse in its background and interests. Each municipality in a constituency has its own set of community groups and local government entities, and in terms of its characteristics and needs one community can be quite different from another just 10 miles down the road. It is for these reasons that a rural constituency should be limited in sheer geographic size and include relatively fewer electors than a riding within a large city. To require a greater number of electors will remove the MLA's ability to deal effectively and personally with his constituents.

Besides these reasons for limiting the size of rural constituencies, there is the larger issue of maintaining a balance between the very different urban and rural interests within Alberta. In other government structures there can exist two Houses of the Legislature, thereby allowing one of the assemblies to be based on representation by population while the other to be based on considerations other than population such as geography, demography, or the balancing of the interests of the majority and minorities. However, with a unicameral system such as is in place in Alberta, the representation within the Legislative Assembly has to singularly strike an effective balance between representation based on population and the protection of not only minority interests but the interests of Alberta as a whole.

While we would prefer that the total number of ridings would not increase, we believe that as a means of achieving effective representation for all Albertans, additional constituencies are warranted. Specifically, we would recommend that: rural constituencies remain as they are presently constituted; Calgary and Edmonton could be and should be allowed two additional constituencies each; Medicine Hat should be allowed two ridings instead of the present one.

I hope these comments and recommendations will be of assistance to the committee in completing this very important task. Respectfully submitted, Judy Gordon, mayor of Lacombe.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Judy.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions or comments from committee members?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah, I've got one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you. Thank you very much for your presentation. At one point you said that there should be "relatively fewer electors," and I'm just wondering if you can quantify that. Relative is a number I'm not familiar with. When you talk about "relatively fewer," like in a rural constituency, have you got a figure in mind? Can you give me a range?

MRS. GORDON: Just our own constituency - I mean, as far as the area and the number of electors within that area. You know, as far as the geographic area and the size of the constituency compared to the number of electors in the area.

MR. SIGURDSON: When you look at the map of Alberta and they show the constituency boundaries for the province, the two most northern constituencies, Fort McMurray and Peace River, are probably geographically the largest. They both fit inside that norm or that allowance that's been handed down by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Yet they're so much larger in terms of population and geography. Have you any comments? How do you equate fairness there?

MRS. GORDON: What is the population in those ridings?

MR. SIGURDSON: I believe it's, off hand . . .

MS BARRETT: Peace River is 29,980. What was the other one, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: Fort McMurray.

MRS. GORDON: We just feel very strongly that our MLA must travel a great distance to see all the people within the constituency, and it is a very big job. If you make that constituency any larger, it is going to be very hard on that MLA.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think, further to your comment, Judy, that when we're out in Hanna tomorrow, we will no doubt hear from the various communities in the Chinook constituency, which is a large, completely organized constituency with a lot of small towns and villages. We'll hear some of the complexities at that time as well.

Okay. Anyone else?

Thanks very much, Judy.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know Judy has another commitment, so if she leaves early, maybe doing so now . . .

MRS. GORDON: I appreciate very much your putting me first. Thank you.

MR. KUJALA: Mr. Chairman, members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, the Rocky school division welcomes this opportunity to be here to make a presentation this evening.

The Rocky school division is basically a rural school division, and to emphasize that, we have 2,800 students in our school division, 2,200 of whom are bused. We have a few points that we would like to make that we feel are relevant to our school division.

The board of the Rocky school division certainly isn't prepared to comment on or to understand all of the implications pertaining to the electoral boundaries review, but as a school division in rural Alberta, where education is the top priority of the provincial government, the supposed transfer of legislative influence from the rural area to the urban area through the electoral boundaries distribution could have an impact on a school division such as ours.

One illustration we'd like to make is that at a recent convention in Calgary one of our trustees had the opportunity to speak with a trustee from the city of Calgary. The trustee from the city of Calgary had easy access to four MLAs within the area

that she represented; we have access to one within our area. In our constituency of Rocky Mountain House our MLA is shared with approximately 70 other elected people, which spreads his time very thin. In the urban areas, in some of them at least, there are approximately three or four elected people in some of the constituencies of some of the MLAs.

The task of our MLA to get around to see everyone whom he is responsible for certainly does, as the speaker before me has indicated, take up a great deal of our MLA's time. Some of the examples of the ramifications that the boundary distribution could have would be the corporate pooling issue, school buildings, distance education, transportation issues: these types of things.

We recognize the need to address the legal precedents and to have equitable electoral boundaries. It's important, however, for the government to consider how effectively rural MLAs can represent their constituents if the geographical areas increase and the number of elected bodies within the electoral boundaries becomes greater. We have discussed this at our board level, and we feel that it would be more equitable, which is a term that we hear in education quite often these days, if the division were made on a rural and an urban basis rather than strictly on a provincial basis.

We certainly appreciate the opportunity to present these views to you, and thank you very much for listening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Gerald.

Questions or comments by panel members? Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yes; I just have one question. When you say that the division should be determined on the rural to urban concept, did you have any percentages of variance in mind when you suggested that?

MR. KUJALA: Well, what we had discussed was that if the urban population and the urban constituencies were tallied up and then the plus/minus 25 rule that seems to be the rule of thumb that's going around - if they were divided in the urban and rural areas we feel it would be a fairer representation than provincialwise.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: One of the areas that we've been concerned about, as Stockwell pointed out, was total population versus electors only. Given that students and people under 18 constitute probably about 40 percent of the population, I'm wondering if you've got any thoughts about which list we should be going with: total population or just those enumerated voters?

MR. KUJALA: Well, I think it's our feeling that the students are up-and-coming electors, regardless of whether they're 18 years of age yet or not. So they're probably going to be citizens of our constituencies in time to come. I think they should be included in that tally.

MR. DAY: Gerald, you mentioned a situation where a person in Calgary felt they had access to a number of MLAs immediately because of the geographical closeness there. Is there a sense that urban MLAs, just for lack of a better word here, can sort of gang up on or outweigh one rural MLA? Is that a concern

you're hearing?

MR. KUJALA: I think probably it's more the fact of the legwork that our MLAs in the rural areas have to do and the number of elected people they have to be associated with because of the geographical distribution of the towns and the villages and all the other elected bodies within the constituencies.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Questions or comments from anyone?

Okay, Gerald. Thank you very much.

MR. KUJALA: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Larry.

MR. WAUD: Good evening, members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. I want to thank you for taking the time to come and listen to us. I know you're busy people, and we appreciate the work that's going into this.

My name is Larry Waud. I am reeve of the county of Lacombe No. 14. This presentation is made on behalf of the county council and the board of education and, I believe, represents the views of the majority of our ratepayers who have elected us to represent them, whenever possible, respecting government decisions that will impact on their lives and livelihoods. No doubt as you have traveled throughout the province, you have heard the same arguments and concerns many, many times. Perhaps what I say to you is not new, but the fact that we are stating our concerns is important, and we want to be on record also.

In our view, the committee faces a very difficult task in striking a balance between the pure representation by population policy and one that will satisfy all the criteria for fair representation. We see the problems confronted by the people of rural Alberta being vastly different from the issues that urban centres must deal with. How can these variances be effectively addressed when the basic philosophy or reason for electing our representatives is so diverse? We do, however, want effective and efficient government, with all people from all segments of the population sensing that they are fairly represented.

To apply simple mathematics and divide the electors by boundaries to achieve the desired numbers is simply not a viable solution. Can you imagine the extensive change that would occur in the rural areas? The size of certain of the constituencies would create an impossible task for the MLA. Not only is the MLA expected to maintain contact with all of the electors but must communicate with members of hospital boards; boards of education; councillors of towns, villages, summer villages, counties, and municipal districts; as well as several other agencies. How can the rural MLA cover the ground and give the electors a sense of effective representation?

Our provincial government is currently in pursuit of a balance of power on the federal scene through the process of Senate reform. Is not the rural population of our province faced with the same kind of dilemma? The solution is not easy, and it is obvious that some choices have to be made. We would recommend that when the choices are determined, careful consideration be given to the rural minority. Perhaps a combination of factors, including square miles and population, could be examined. Also, where possible the use of jurisdictional boundaries to create coterminous boundaries should be used in

order to minimize confusion by the electors. At the present time, our constituency includes a major portion of our county, but small areas from both the east and the west end are included in adjacent constituencies. Simply by including the whole of the county of Lacombe, the desired number of electors could be achieved. I know there have to be choices here too, and I'm not trying to take away from one and give to the other, but I guess there are some natural boundaries within the county that you can consider and within other areas of the province.

Within our boundaries there are seven towns and villages and three summer villages, with a combined population of 20,485. I'm glad the population part was brought up tonight. That was sort of what I was aiming at, that maybe that was a consideration. I hadn't heard of the population figure being considered before. The county shares financially with all of these municipalities. There is only one public school system within these boundaries; therefore, a common electoral boundary has definite advantages.

We wish you well in this difficult assignment, and we trust that a resolve can be obtained that will provide all Albertans favourable representation with effective government. I thank you on behalf of all the people I represent for this opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Larry.

MR. BRUSEKER: Larry, I just wanted to ask you a question here. You say, "Perhaps a combination of factors, including square miles and population, could be examined." I'm wondering if you had any kind of a formula in the back of your mind someplace that you had discussed in one of your meetings at some point.

MR. WAUD: Not really. I think it's to sow a seed more than anything, for the benefit of the committee. But taking into consideration that there is a geographic area to be covered along with the numbers of people who have to be contacted, it is perhaps something the committee could look at. In all fairness, rather than just using numbers, maybe it can be sold to the population and the electors out there that geographic area is a consideration and not only numbers of people.

In that regard, too, perhaps I would suggest that access for those people who are in the sparse areas and some distance from the large centres - perhaps they don't feel as well represented. In other words, democracy partly has to do with access and being represented in the way of being a feeling that you can get in touch with your MLA, that you can go to government offices, and so on. I think that has a lot to do with it as well.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any others?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Larry, I was wondering: do you appreciate that Lacombe is the fifth smallest in square miles of the rural electoral divisions? Would you set that as a standard?

MR. WAUD: The present electoral is not that large; that is true. What I am suggesting is that if we were to expand and make our boundaries coterminous with the county, it would be larger. I guess what I'm driving at is that I'm trying to be not self-centred in this whole thing. I want the committee to look at all aspects of it.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The committee will be looking at that, of course, but you appreciate, I think, that there are 443 separate municipal entities that you have to try and consider. As well, of course, we're talking about 26 federal seats. We're talking about hospital boards and school boards, very difficult . . . But I'm glad you raised the point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I, too, appreciate the work you put into the presentation. You speak of access, and that's the bottom line whether you're a rural constituent or an urban constituent. In the largest - I'm going to go to extremes now, where you've got Edmonton-Whitemud with 31,500 voters and then . . . I won't use Cardston because of the anomaly with the Blood Indian Band, but I'll use Cypress-Redcliff, which has approximately 9,000 voters. Nine thousand voters have access to one individual through a telephone call, and then there are 31,500 who have access to one individual through a telephone call. I think that's the problem we're trying to deal with. We've got three and a half to one in terms of voters in one constituency compared to another constituency, and it's their access; it's not just the access of elected representatives. In that there may be 70 elected representatives in one rural constituency, there are other groups and organizations in other urban constituencies.

I know that Frank Bruseker asked you if you had a formula, but I'm wondering: can you see a 25 percent variance, plus or minus, as being more equitable? Would it be fairer? Have you got a number that you think we should be working towards?

MR. WAUD: I think what I had in mind in the area . . . I wasn't thinking so much of a formula of 25 percent. I think I was thinking more in the area of if an MLA was from, say, a large northern area and he has all those square miles, perhaps there could be some ratio of square miles to numbers brought into the whole formula.

I realize there are choices to be made, and I know, as I said, that there are going to be some losers in this whole process. We recognize that.

MR. SIGURDSON: One of the things this committee has the opportunity to do is to make a number of recommendations to other committees and other offices of government. Some of the things that perhaps we ought to be looking at is making sure that MLAs have access to some of the equipment. For example, I as an urban member have a mobile telephone. All members are allowed to do that. In my drive down to Red Deer today I took three telephone calls and accomplished a great deal of work. Should that be provided to all members? Should we be using fax machines in constituencies to facilitate the transfer of information from Lacombe to Edmonton and back? Should those things be provided to MLAs that currently aren't being provided, to make sure there is that opportunity to communicate more quickly and more effectively?

MR. WAUD: I think probably that will come with new technology, and certainly it's going to be more of a feasible thing to happen.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I might editorialize, Tom, one of the things that I think Larry was getting at is that – and I'll use myself as an example. I just finished some pre-session meetings in the constituency of Taber-Warner. I drove 40 miles to the small community hall at the edge of the constituency. I usually have between 10 and 15 people come out. Each of those people knows me on a first-name basis. Each of them could pick up the phone and call. But they choose to come out every year because they like to meet their MLA face to face. There's that one-on-one contact that's so important in rural areas.

Yes, Gary.

MR. SEVERTSON: The other comment I would like to make, too, maybe to Frank: it's the same reason you're here tonight, because you could conduct your hearings in Edmonton and everybody could phone if it was the same principle that we're using as a phone. People like to come face to face with the decision-makers.

MR. SIGURDSON: I think they like to do that in Edmonton and in Calgary as well, but perhaps because of the large numbers, there's a degree of anonymity.

MR. SEVERTSON: But I meant the same reason we're here tonight.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah.

MR. SEVERTSON: You can do it by phone.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's just a suggestion that it's the same thing in Edmonton and Calgary as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions?

Thanks, Larry, and as the question was asked, if you give any further thought to your numbers and a combination of factors, including square miles and population, we'd be pleased to receive a supplementary letter from you.

Okay. Moving on, then. Rod.

MR. McDERMAND: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman, members of the Legislature, and members of this select committee. The board of the Lacombe Community Health Care Centre appreciates the opportunity to respond to this proposal to amend the electoral boundaries in Alberta. Our board has misgivings in regard to this proposal, as it perceives the outcome to cause a disturbance in the equitable balance in the Legislature of rural/urban split. Historically, the Lacombe Community Health Care Centre has its roots in the community and served the county residents since its beginning in 1937 as the Lacombe General hospital, followed by the Lacombe nursing home in 1967, the Auxiliary hospital in 1986.

The Auxiliary hospital and nursing home boundaries have been coterminous with the Lacombe constituency. Political representation in the provincial Legislature has been through the elected members of the Lacombe constituency. In the Lacombe constituency under the present format the MLA is accountable to six hospital districts or portions thereof. In addition, there are three school boards, six municipal councils, and one county council. And it's interesting when we were discussing Edmonton-Whitemud. I don't think there is a hospital in Edmonton-Whitemud, and I think that certainly cuts down the workload. I don't think there is a municipal district there other than the

city council to respond to. So I think there are different parameters other than just numbers of electorate. Also impacting the hospital field indirectly and involving home care are the various lodges and manors throughout the Lacombe constituency.

The base of the Alberta economy is in oil, gas, and agriculture, and it's located in rural Alberta. It is essential that the agriculture and natural resources industries be energetically maintained. Residents of these areas need to be equitably represented, and this will not be achieved if representation is based on demographics alone.

Resources, services, and programs for rural hospitals are presently inequitable, and if the proposed redefinition of boundaries takes place, our hospital board will have greater difficulty in accessing services, the majority of which are in urban centres.

We would like to draw a parallel to the support of Alberta and its government of Meech Lake and the priority that Alberta places on the Triple E Senate and Senate reform. To the proposed electoral boundaries changes: we perceive this to be contradictory in terms of equitable representation of rural Alberta. Redefinition of boundaries, if taken to the ridiculous, would result in the infrastructure problems inherent in areas such as Los Angeles; Mexico City; Bangkok, Thailand, where the centralized power base of the political will has caused the migration to the urban centres of previously rural citizens due to inequitable representation. It's unfortunate that your committee doesn't have the parameters as to how large a city should be as well as how small a rural electoral district can be.

If this process of redefinition to which we are responding today becomes a legal entity, Alberta may find itself with no rural residents, but with those two major urban centres in which all power is based. To legitimize this procedure only on demographics gives future legislators a basis of taking our society to one of only urban. There must be a conscious effort to mix demographics and geographics in order to protect our heritage, our economy, and our culture. Legislators must rise above today's pressures and realize what their short-term achievements may create in the long term.

I'd like to submit this as the board chairman of the Lacombe Community Health Care Centre and accept any questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Rod.

Questions for Rod? Yes, Stock.

MR. DAY: Rod, you mentioned combining geographics and demographics, the same as Larry Waud did. Did you have a formula, by any chance, or just as a suggestion you're putting it out?

MR. McDERMAND: I think that it's a mix of both, because there are other things than counting people. I think we all recognize that.

One point that I missed was the fact that what gave you the notion that 25 percent variance is going stand up in court?

MR. DAY: It already has. That's the difficulty.

MR. McDERMAND: But that is only the B.C. court. It's not been taken to the Supreme Court of Canada, and I think we're going on an interpretation of a provincial court. I'm a little bit miffed why a directive from the Supreme Court, when we're talking about the Charter, wasn't taken to an actual – and based

on that. Because I really think that the background is a little bit weak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rod, we think one of the reasons that British Columbia chose not to appeal to the Supreme Court is that between the time the judgment was brought down by Chief Justice McLachlin of the B.C. court and the time that an appeal could have been launched, Justice McLachlin was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. She's now one of the nine justices on the Supreme Court. Now, that's still just one of nine, but she is now on the Supreme Court, the highest court in the land.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just to clear up . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a second. On this specific point? Because I've got Pam on the list.

MR. SIGURDSON: No.

MS BARRETT: I would just add to what Bob said in terms of the judicial decisions. Other provinces and the federal government also observe the 25 percent rule. Some provinces, in fact, have gone to as tight as a 10 percent rule. So the assumption is, in fact, that the Supreme Court would rule on the basis of the federal system, which operates on the 25 percent. It's probably in the legal world a safe assumption.

I of course got the drift of what you were saying, and I appreciate your submission. But I do wonder: are you suggesting no changes at all, Rod?

MR. McDERMAND: I think I'm looking farther down the road than what you're looking at here, and I'm afraid that what you're doing gives you a basis in law or in legislation to carry the process to the ridiculous. That's really what I'm saying. If you've ever had the opportunity to visit some of our major disasters – and I think of the cities of the world that are major disasters. If you fly into Mexico City, you don't see the tarmac until you hit the ground because of pollution, and it's people pollution. We are in the same situation here, where we can create the same disaster or we can work around it.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Well, I take editorial licence in assuming that what you're saying is that the reason that the major cities in the world are polluted disasters is because of their electoral divisions. Would that be correct in assuming that's what you're getting at?

MR. McDERMAND: It's part of the problem.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

The other question I have is: if you make the case, you know, which you did, in terms of the number of school boards, hospital boards, whatever, that you have to deal with, would you also make no case at all with respect to the larger rural electoral ridings and the smaller electoral ridings that are shown on this map? Is there any difference, any recommendation you would make at all in this regard?

MR. McDERMAND: I don't have a recommendation. No, I'm sorry.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just one clarification I wanted to make, Pam, on your comments where you said many jurisdictions use the plus/minus 25 percent. That is true, but we should not forget that the federal government allows two seats in the Northwest Territories and one in Yukon far beyond the population figures, and legislation in both B.C. and Saskatchewan allows for special cases to be made in sparsely populated northern ridings. So there are some exceptions to the rule. We understand that a group of lawyers in Saskatchewan may take the Saskatchewan government to court even though most of their ridings fall within the plus/minus 25 percent. So there's no guarantee, regardless of what we do here, that we won't be taken to court. What we're trying to balance is a strong legal position with what's right.

Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I just wanted to clear up a misconception as well, and that's that while the urban members may only be dealing with one hospital board, one school board, and one city council, for example in my constituency we've got a number of community leagues, and they function pretty much as a group of concerned individuals that provide a great deal of services. I've got seven. I've also got a task force in northeast Edmonton that looks at 10 separate issues, ranging from transportation to sports facilities, and that occupies a good deal of time as well. While they don't have an elected status, they certainly have a great deal of input into the amount of time that an MLA would give them.

MR. McDERMAND: If I might rebut that. I think it's unfortunate that I didn't mention that of those six municipal councils, there's obviously a Lions Club in every one of them and as well many other interested groups that the MLA certainly has to respond to. So I'm just saying that I think it's a huge workload in any jurisdiction, not to be underplayed because it's rural.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions or comments of Rod? Thanks very much then.

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

MR. VISSER: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I guess we came a long ways to come to this hearing, which is indicative of the importance we have placed on this whole matter. We're very concerned that it will, in fact, upset some of the balance that we see there now in the rural/urban mix. There's no doubt, I think, that we're concerned about that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: George, let's just take a moment. It's George Visser from the county of Barrhead who's with us tonight.

George.

MR. VISSER: Okay. Mr. Chairman, members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. As I indicated, we feel very strongly about some of these things, and we want to be responsible as well, so the council of the county of Barrhead No. 11 would like to respond to the proposed changes to the provincial electoral boundaries as follows.

Our council agrees with the concept of representation by population. I don't think we can really say they can't agree with that. But we also would like to state emphatically that there must be some tolerance allowance provided when establishing boundaries based on population. The matter of population

density or sparsity makes a big difference to MLAs when serving their constituents. To illustrate our point, we would compare vast areas such as Lesser Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, Peace River, Dunvegan, Athabasca-Lac La Biche, or West Yellowhead, as compared to some of the more densely populated areas. The county of Barrhead, of course, is right next to some of these areas, and if you're going to address some of the problems, we're afraid that we may get swallowed up, and you know, that is a very big concern to us as well.

Rural areas are at a great disadvantage in this regard. Population, therefore, cannot be the only criterion used in establishing electoral boundaries. A formula could be adopted wherein a combination of factors could be used to determine boundaries, such as population, population density, geography, distance from major centres, road network, and even a factor to address the extremely remote communities where air access may be the only means of transportation. I'm not saying anything new. All the other briefs have indicated something similar, and I guess that's where we're coming from as well, Mr. Chairman.

We're going to throw in another thing here, and maybe you can respond to it. Perhaps the committee could even consider extending the urban boundaries into the rural area or the rural boundaries into the urban areas in the case of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, thereby alleviating some of the rural/urban differences. There may be others. Now, we haven't really thought about that, whether that's a plus or a minus, but we think it's important that urban people understand the rural situation. This may be one way to access that kind of understanding somehow. So we've thrown that in as a consideration.

We also agree that there must be some tolerance allowance provided when establishing boundaries based on population, and the 25 percent figure handed down by the courts in British Columbia would be fair. We have cited extremely sparsely populated areas in parts of the province, and because of the accessibility to the MLA perhaps there should be provisions in your guidelines that would allow for these extraordinary circumstances. Again, these areas would be those addressed in our third paragraph dealing with Lesser Slave Lake, et cetera.

We would also like to bring to your attention the matter of the rural MLA serving several communities, where numerous elected entities including towns, villages, summer villages, municipal districts, and counties are served, as compared to several MLAs serving the Edmonton city council. Flowing from each of these towns and communities are also small community groups, again where the MLA must cater to their wishes and meet periodically with the groups. Special attention must be drawn to the fact that in the sparsely populated areas it's very difficult for the individual constituent to contact his MLA. On numerous occasions you will find that one must travel many miles to visit the constituency office. Therefore, again it is important that the guidelines address this issue.

Mr. Sigurdson talked about telephone contact, fax machines, and things like that. I guess our point is that communications may not be enough. I think we're asking for an understanding of the rural position as being very important too, and we feel that we have to keep some balance in representation to understand the rural position.

I guess also at this point I would like to just discuss briefly the idea of democracy. We say one person, one vote. We all believe that, of course, and that's why we have to agree to the concept of representation by population. But we also, I think, have to consider that those people that are in sparse areas may lose some of their democratic rights by being that far away from

their constituency representation. We think it's not only the problem of the MLA serving the people out there, but it's also a problem of those people out there having the proper access to their democratic responsibility. So we think that has to be taken into consideration.

Therefore, in view of the pending court action in British Columbia, we would agree with the suggested minimum tolerance factor of the average constituency population as suggested in a letter from the Special Select Committee on Electoral Boundaries dated November 14, 1989. In that letter you have also made a number of concerns that we should address. We agree with them. I won't read them, because you know what they are.

Just to sum up, I would say that constituency boundaries should be established housing government services where decentralization of provincial government services took place in 1971 as well as established trading centres. Throughout Alberta there are many lakes, rivers, and natural boundaries that should be used when setting up constituency boundaries, and attention should be given in maintaining whole communities and not dividing them into one or more constituencies. The demographic makeup of a constituency provides a viable base upon which a sound case may be made for the setting up of constituency boundaries. Trading boundaries as established by the chamber of commerce or the regional planning commission should also be looked at when establishing boundaries. Medical services is also an important and significant criterion. The road network is an extremely important criterion again when considering boundary adjustments.

Another important criterion that should be addressed by the committee would be the matter of the naming of constituencies. Rather than using names of towns within the constituency, other names should be used, such as names of rivers or other well-known criteria. In using names of towns or villages, it is very difficult to include other towns of a similar size within that constituency without creating animosity.

Mr. Chairman, members of your special committee, we would like to thank you for the time and respectfully trust that you will consider our request and make every effort to establish principles in keeping with the direction given to your committee, paying special attention to the matters raised in our brief as they relate to the rural constituencies. We know your task is going to be a difficult one. Nevertheless, please consider all the factors before making your final recommendation.

Thank you for your time and participation. Signed by myself, the reeve of the county of Barrhead.

I failed to introduce our county manager, Mr. Allan Charles, who is here with me. We'd be pleased to answer any questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, George.

Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thanks very much again for the presentation. You seem to be arguing or suggesting that we work towards as equitable a population distribution to each constituency as is possible. Would it then be the onus, for those constituencies that would fall outside a plus or minus figure of whatever that might end up being, of the commission - not this committee but the commission that draws those boundaries - to eventually have to justify those constituencies that fall outside whatever level of tolerance is set?

MR. VISSER: Well, I guess we feel that this committee is the

one that's going to set the parameters, the principles.

MR. SIGURDSON: Right.

MR. VISSER: Once that's been established, then the other group is going to have to address each constituency along those principles established. So we think this group is very important. It's going to really impact, once you've made your decision, what will happen out there.

MR. SIGURDSON: I appreciate that. What I'm saying though . . . Let's suppose we say there will be plus or minus 25 percent, and the commission then says, "Well, we can't do this." Should they be then forced to justify why Pincher Creek-Athabasca constituency, which is very large, is going to be the size that it is? That commission would then have to give the reasons and the rationale for a constituency falling above or below the numbers this committee sets?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if I can interject, it may well be that the committee will set out a list. I'm just hypothesizing, because we decided as a committee not to sit down and try to solve any problems until we had heard from everyone. But we might well set up a list of eight points, Tom, and any constituency falling outside the norm would have to meet six of the eight or all eight of the eight criteria to be considered.

MR. VISSER: I think that's how we understand it as well. I may be missing something, Tom, as far as your question is concerned, because once you lay out the criteria, then the other committee is going to have to follow that. Am I not correct?

MR. SIGURDSON: They may say that there are circumstances we weren't able to consider; that's all.

MR. VISSER: Okay. We strongly feel there are some constituencies that have to have special consideration. We really think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much.

Any other questions? Anyone else? Thanks again.

Before we proceed to the next listing, we've been trying to – first of all, I asked Bob to indicate where you're all from so we could get a sense of community of preference. We have six presenters from Lacombe, five from Rocky Mountain House, two from Barrhead, six from Innisfail, three from Red Deer, one from Ponoka-Rimbey, and two from Stettler. Well, we've already heard from three of the Lacombe presenters, Rocky, and the Barrhead delegation. So it seems that by coming back, if we were to go north of the city, we could leave some people out in the south and vice versa. It may be more practical to come right back here to Red Deer. One date the committee members have looked at, although we can't confirm with the hotel, would be Thursday, February 22. It seems apparent we're not going to get through all 25 briefs tonight, so what I'm going to ask . . . Yes, Ron.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, a suggestion. I heard you say three from Barrhead, did you?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are two. The two gentlemen who were here were listed as two, but really it was one brief.

MR. MOORE: Oh. I was going to say that those who are far out we should accommodate tonight. We shouldn't ask people from Barrhead or the far out extremes to come back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Thanks, Ron. I appreciate that.

MR. MOORE: The ones in closer should be . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. And that would be appreciated with regard to the Stettler – there are some Stettler presentations to be made tonight and one from Ponoka-Rimbey. The others are north, south, or west of Red Deer. And the other thing I'd ask you, then, to think about: if we do come back on the 22nd, if there are some of you who know you can't come out that evening, then we'll try to accommodate you tonight. Please understand that we're juggling to – we didn't know before tonight who'd be coming out or where you'd be from, so we're trying to adjust to meet your schedule as well.

George, you had a question?

MR. VISSER: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Just one comment, I guess. I don't know what your future plans are. I do know that in our area there are a number of organizations that have planned on presenting briefs. They were asking us, "Is this the last kick at the cat?" And we said, "Well, we'll put in a plug for you." Come out to Barrhead, because there are a number of people up there who want to present briefs. We came here because we thought this was our last opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're actually back in Edmonton on . . . What is the date?

MR. PRITCHARD: February 26.

MR. CHAIRMAN: February 26. Until we hear from groups, we don't know where there's an interest. That's part of the chicken-and-egg situation we're in.

MS BARRETT: As the letter we sent out a few months ago states, it would be impossible for us to get to every riding and keep doing our own work as well and then get ready for the session to begin. What we do invite for people where we can't get out there is to have them write in their submissions to us. I mean, they can be in handwritten form. Of course, as Bob said, we do have the hearings on the morning of the 26th as well; it's a Monday. But if they can't make it out, written submissions are more than welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We're going to take a short five-minute break. Those who intend to present briefs and have a timing problem, if you could come forward, along with those who are next on the list, we'll try to sort it out.

[The committee recessed from 8:16 p.m. to 8:25 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Apparently there's been a request that we put the transparency back on showing the public hearings to date, the locations of the hearings, and the number of individuals attending the hearings. Now, you can appreciate that at the very beginning, when we were up in High Level and Peace River when the attendance was sparser, there hadn't been a lot of advance notice. That was right at the beginning of the process. As we got down, particularly in Vulcan and Medicine

Hat, you can see how things picked up. Of course, tonight we have the largest attendance and the largest number of briefs to date.

Okay. Bob has been juggling with the names. We're going to attempt to accommodate those who are from outside communities and also those who can't come back on the 22nd.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could have Sam and Jean MacDonald, Alex Rose, Maurice Lewis, Earl Dreeshen, and Charlie Cutforth.

Sam and Jean MacDonald.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jean's here.

MRS. MacDONALD: I'm just doing it.

MR. PRITCHARD: You're just doing it? Okay, Margaret McPhee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to attempt to speak a little louder. If you can't hear what's being said at the back, if you'd put your hand up or give us a signal so we can see it, because I can't imagine - well, Pam's not with us just now - these gentlemen being shy.

All right. We'll start with Alex.

MR. ROSE: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I submitted my letter and faxed the submission of the Lacombe chamber of commerce. I have a copy here today. In reviewing it, I find that it simply reiterates the position many of the people from rural areas have raised, so I'm not going to read it, if that is acceptable. I should note that the submission of the chamber was prepared by a former MLA from Lacombe constituency who had extensive experience in these matters.

The second submission I have is from the Progressive Conservative Association of Lacombe. It's quite brief, so I'll read it into the record, if I may, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHISWELL: Mr. Chairman, could we have these people speak up? We can hear you fine, but we can't hear the ones that are speaking away from us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Could you sit sideways, Alex, so you're . . . See if that'll work better.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maybe he should be talking more directly into the mikes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the microphones are just for recording. They're not hooked up to the system in the room. Can you get us something? What about this microphone over here? Bob, have we got a microphone that's working? What about over here? People can't hear the presenters. As you can see, our technical crew is scurrying to find a solution.

Alex, if you can begin just by speaking a little louder, please. By the time we get to Earl, we should have a solution.

MR. ROSE: Mr. Chairman, these come in the form of suggestions from the Conservative Association of Lacombe, which had its annual meeting last week.

Item number one, there should be an analogy drawn with the Triple E Senate; that is, to provide fair, balanced representation, keeping in mind that nonurban voters and local governments

have the stewardship of most of the land area of Alberta.

Number two, take some of the population of urban areas into the surrounding rural constituencies. I believe one of the members of the committee pointed out that is the case in Red Deer, that Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South incorporate part of the rural area. It's probably a good mix, leading to better understanding by both types of population.

Number three, the rural population has a relatively high proportion of self-employed people who are directly affected by government policy and by legislation and who need strong representation.

Number four, courts of law should not interfere in purely political matters of this kind.

That was the submission, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Alex.

MR. ROSE: I have one final submission. It's my personal submission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're getting three for one. All right.

MR. ROSE: I've approached the question from a little different perspective, more of a legal/political perspective. I'll just touch on the points as I go through.

Number one, the 25 percent decision of the Supreme Court of B.C. was not appealed so far as I am aware, and I heard you confirming that, Mr. Chairman. I think it is risky business to make decisions solely on the decision of one judge at that level. It didn't go through the Court of Appeal of B.C. nor to the Supreme Court of Canada, although I notice that the justice who made the well-reasoned decision is now a member of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Number two, the province of Alberta ought not to alter its electoral boundaries practices merely to conform with such a decision, especially one from another provincial jurisdiction.

Number three, the setting of electoral boundaries in the province is within the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and is a purely political matter. The Legislature should proceed to exercise its sovereign authority as it sees fit, and I mention the Legislature there. If challenged in the courts, the issue should be appealed in the usual manner up to and including the Supreme Court of Canada. Now, the reason I make that recommendation, Mr. Chairman and committee, is that that is the way we learn of the various facets of a problem and its extent in our community - one of the ways.

Number four, if the courts of Alberta and the Supreme Court of Canada render decisions similar to that of the Supreme Court of B.C., the Constitution of Canada ought to be amended to restrain the judiciary from appropriating undue political authority to itself for which it is not accountable at the ballot box.

Number five, the B.C. decision was based on the provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is particularly the point which I am interested in attempting to make. As is becoming increasingly apparent, the Charter has serious flaws inimical to the evolution of democracy in Canada. I've attached to my submission an article from *Lawyers Weekly* in which Roy Romanow, a well-known Saskatchewan politician and in his earlier days a Member of the House of Commons of Canada and one of the individuals involved in the final compromise that brought into being the Charter of Rights, is now saying that they did not foresee the consequences of entrenching

rights in such a manner in this country. I'm not going to go through it all. But that matter, as we progress and learn about the consequences and implications of the Charter, is being redressed. The reason I made the earlier recommendations is that this is the way you bring those forward and that they are addressed by a wide variety of people with different expertise. It struck me as we were sitting here, the only person who's missing here is the judge who decided the B.C. case, because what she said in her reasons, which were very well done, does not accord with what the people here have said so far.

And then there's an abstract attached as well, Mr. Chairman. It's called *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada*. This is a book that was released last fall by the Canadian-American Committee and sponsored in part by the C.D. Howe Institute of Canada and the National Planning Association of the United States. There's an observation in this book that I think is pertinent and a question that is continually raised in Canadian society. The author is talking about what are the differences between Canadians and Americans and what are the similarities and what's happening to these things. He's drawn an analogy where the United States and Canada are like two trains going in the same direction on parallel tracks. Then he has this comment to make. I think he's looking into the future.

An emphasis on the continuing differences between Canada and the United States after the enactment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms may involve an underestimate of the potential for change in Canadian values and behavior that will develop as the Charter is implemented by the courts. Although favored more by the left than the right, it probably goes further toward taking the country in an American direction than any other enacted structural change, including the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. This is the point that applies here and out of which the B.C. case arose.

The Charter's stress on due process and individual rights, although less stringent than that of the U.S. Bill of Rights, should increase individualism and litigiousness north of the border.

In my respectful opinion, sir, courts of law in the Canadian system are not well suited to what you might call evolutionary matters. They've not been designed for that. They've not developed in that manner. There are severe restrictions on them in certain areas, especially when change is occurring rapidly, as it is today.

Number six, acquiescence to courts of law in this issue have serious and perhaps fatal political consequences for the concept of the Triple E Senate, and I emphasize the word "political." The legal consequences can be tidied up by amendment of the Constitution of this country. However, the political consequences are that you find a court that's saying, and Madam Justice McLachlin said, that the first and most fundamental aspect of this case is the right to an equal vote, and then representation by population is also fundamental. If people become convinced that that is the utopia in a democracy, you can see the difficulty that we're going to have implementing a Triple E Senate. Now, that's of course a concept to which the people, the Legislature, and the government of this province have committed themselves. I raise that simply to bring it to the attention of the committee in looking at the overview.

Seven, this issue demonstrates why a Triple E Senate should be the political master of the Charter in the absence of specific amendments to the Charter. We need a powerful political institution which can act as an effective counterbalance to the shift of constitutional focus from the community, which has been our tradition in history, to the individual, which is the American

system, and of policy-making power from the legislative branch of government to the judicial branch of government, which is again a step in the American direction. These are brought about by the Charter of Rights. In other words, one individual has caused this case in British Columbia to come before the courts and have these enormous consequences. Before the Charter we had never heard of it. That may be good in some senses, good in the others, but we're going to have to make a choice one day about it. Further, the consent of such a Senate to the use of the notwithstanding clause in section 33 of the Charter should be required, and again I point to the abstract from the *Continental Divide*.

That's my submission, sir, and I simply wanted to bring that sort of view to your committee. Even though there's a good deal of nuts and bolts that your committee is concerned with, I think there's that broader perspective of what we're operating, the kind of political/legal environment in which we're operating, and the direction we appear to be headed.

Thank you very much, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions? Yes, Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Alex. I appreciate the big picture. It helps us to see this in perspective. We've had submissions by a number of lawyers in this process, and I wonder if we can just ask your opinion. It's not often we get the chance for a free legal opinion.

MR. ROSE: It's only worth what you pay for it.

MR. DAY: We realize you're not committing a legal opinion to some statement of fact, but if we were to choose to ignore the 25 percent guideline and the ruling in British Columbia, in your legal opinion what would be the chances, do you think, in Alberta of a challenge similar to what British Columbia was faced with?

MR. ROSE: I think the likelihood would be very high. You know, Charter litigation is quite popular. [laughter] I know what you're thinking of.

MR. DAY: I didn't want to say it.

MR. ROSE: The legal profession was generally against the Charter, so it's not of our doing. Yes. And you have individuals who are philosophically committed to that kind of government where you must have written laws and written rules, and you try to achieve the optimum through that process, more of a civil approach, as we have in the province of Quebec and certain American states and France in Europe, than the common law system, which was quite the reverse, that the individual is assumed to have all the rights except those which were prohibited. I've always felt we had an enormously advanced Constitution, such as it was in 1867, because all it did was set up a framework to provide institutions to carry on government, and then it left it to the folks to decide where they're going from there, and it's still that case.

Incidentally, on that point Dean Christian at the University of Alberta, Faculty of Law, has written a little paper about the change the Charter is bringing about in terms of the powers of the judiciary that I think we all have to address in terms of the kind of democracy we're going to have. You know, just as I said earlier, what I hear you saying and what Madam Justice

McLachlin was saying are two different things. We're going to have to one day decide: are we going to govern ourselves by the democratic legislative process, or are we going to have courts telling us how we must govern ourselves? That's the essence of the problem. I'm not being critical of Justice McLachlin. She did a terrific job, but there's an entirely different philosophy out there. It's called the 'juristocracy', and it's a word Dean Christian coined to describe the judiciary in the new society of the Charter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much. Anyone else? Okay. Alex, thanks very much for your three briefs then.

MR. ROSE: Thank you, Bob.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Earl.

MR. DREESHEN: I wish to thank the committee for the opportunity to present my submission to them regarding proposed changes to the electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta. My name is Earl Dreeshen. I'm a board member from the Elnora General hospital. The Elnora hospital board has presented to your committee a written submission indicating our concerns about reduced rural representation in the Alberta Legislature. In my submission this evening I will be summarizing our position as well as making some personal observations and recommendations. I'm going to present an argument which I feel will outline the need for representation by responsibility versus the standard representation by population. In particular, I'll be addressing two items that your committee has indicated are important factors, these being, first, any geographic, demographic, or other factors that should be considered in the distribution of constituencies and the determination of boundaries and, secondly, the impact of the determination of the constituency boundaries on the ability of Members of the Legislative Assembly to discharge their duties in their constituencies.

What does equal representation mean? In my role as a hospital board member I respect the time and commitment our MLAs must devote to health care problems throughout our vast region. We gratefully acknowledge that much of this personal attention is given to health care concerns even though there are a wide variety of other constituency problems and concerns. Also, as an elected community representative I'm acutely aware of the need to enhance, in all possible ways, the image and effectiveness of our rural communities. This image is improved by expanding rural representation, not by diluting it.

Let's look at the following points. Urban MLAs can easily organize and gather for meetings dealing with citywide concerns that affect all their respective constituents. Municipal problems are shared among urban MLAs. Rural MLAs cannot easily do this because of the great physical distances and vast variety of regional concerns in their areas, ranging from health care to agriculture to municipal development.

Secondly, urban MLAs have bureaucratic contact with one city council, two major school boards, and a handful of health care boards. The concerns of these groups, although complex, are usually handled through commissions or other such groups, then presented to the MLAs. I'm sure there may be some argument on that. Rural MLAs must deal with a large number of elected officials. For example, our Innisfail MLA must represent and address the needs and concerns of five incorporated villages and their councils, three hospital boards, three school districts with

additional links to the city of Red Deer school district due to constituent concerns, three municipal districts, a total of 69 elected officials.

Thirdly, the discussions with city council and other various boards are directed to all of the 17 or 18 MLAs from the city, can usually be approached from a single municipal view, and will always remain municipal in scope. Rural MLAs must deal with diverse areas of concern.

Fourth, urban constituency duties require minimal travel and do not involve the need for diverse constituency office contact. An urban MLA can contact any constituent from his or her car phone. Rural MLAs must deal with strenuous travel requirements over their vast areas and with the inconvenience of long-distance calling throughout their constituencies. In our area this is further complicated by a cellular phone network that at best covers less than half of our constituency.

The fifth point: Edmonton MLAs have the advantage of being home with their families while other large centres at least have reasonably direct home access through commuter service. Rural MLAs must deal with family separation for long periods of time, and long hours must be devoted to travel time back and forth to our provincial capital.

In summary, therefore the vast duties, areas of concern, and great travel constraints that are already faced by rural MLAs would only be added to by lowering the number of rural constituencies and thereby increasing the constituency areas of rural ridings. This could only lead to further dilution of our important rural representation in our provincial government. We feel very strongly that this would be a move in the wrong direction.

Politically, more and more important decisions are being made about rural life. Concerns about the environment, agriculture, delivery of education and health care in rural Alberta, municipal development, wildlife, forestry, and the petroleum industry need to be constantly monitored. It is the rural MLA who best understands the impact of the decisions made in these areas on their rural constituents who confront and live with these concerns on a daily level.

The present government has made a major initiative to enhance rural Alberta through the municipal redevelopment proposals. This should be applauded, the intention to make rural Alberta a place to stay or to go to rather than a place to come from. Reducing rural representation in the Legislature conflicts with this noble initiative. It is obvious that strong rural representation is a benefit to all Albertans.

If we look at the approach used by the federal government in their handling of our economy, we see how policies designed to keep a lid on inflation in urban Ontario have affected the other parts of the country. It should be obvious why rural Albertans and, indeed, all Albertans must strive to maintain a balanced representative structure. The concern over diluting the rural representation by increased urban seats can be addressed by fostering an awareness of the diverse responsibilities of rural MLAs versus the more direct and organized responsibilities of their urban counterparts and, secondly, by emphasizing the need for a strong rural voice in Edmonton and pointing out the resulting benefits to all Albertans.

I would like to suggest for your consideration that an in-depth study of the responsibilities of our MLAs be undertaken, using the following guidelines: first, the total population of constituencies; second, the total number of bureaucratic divisions or elected officials in each constituency; third, the diversity of the constituency, including factors that are potential political

conflicts – for example, for Edmonton's 17 MLAs we have one city dump; for every rural MLA we have one big headache – fourth, total constituency area and related travel time; fifth, travel time required to commute to the Legislature; and sixth, travel time required to commute to other centres in order to attend to their regional responsibilities. Once this data has been compiled, a formula should be developed to satisfy the following conditions: that rural representation be set at 50 percent of the seats of the Legislature; second, that boundaries be set to allow representatives to give equality of representation based on an effective use of time management.

In conclusion, I feel it is the equality of access to our Members of the Legislative Assembly that is the fundamental concern for all Albertans. Representation by responsibility must be of paramount concern. Please carefully consider our rural heritage and the importance of the preservation of rural Alberta. The responsibility is great, and our future is in your hands.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Earl.

Questions from members? Yes, first Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Since urban MLAs have nothing to do, I'm wondering if you're suggesting by equality of representation that we reduce the number of urban MLAs in Calgary to one because there's only one city council; similarly in Edmonton and Calgary, reduce it to one; maybe one for Lethbridge and Medicine Hat combined. I guess my question is: where do you draw the line?

MR. DREESHEN: I think I've indicated that one. I've suggested the 50 percent break. That's where we have to draw the line.

MR. BRUSEKER: Why at 50 percent?

MR. DREESHEN: I suppose because it is at this time the status quo. That is what we are looking at, and I suppose we should be remaining at that particular level. I can't see any major change. I know we have these committees that come up every eight years, and I'm sure you people as a group and as a committee feel that you should do something or people are going to feel that maybe you've been wasting your time, but there is no need to change the representation we have at the present time.

MR. BRUSEKER: So do we keep the map like it is?

MR. DREESHEN: I think that if we go back to the recommendations that I had indicated – and as Tom had mentioned earlier when he was suggesting: what are your formulas, what are you going to do? – we can't come up with that until people have looked at all these things. The population of the constituency is important. As many people mentioned earlier, it's the makeup of the constituencies as well that is important. If we talk about the problems – and I don't wish to belittle the representation you have, because it's not going to be easy to look after 30,000 people. But we look at the representation on this particular panel where five out of seven are from urban areas. I suppose those of us that are in the rural area start to wonder just what is going to be occurring.

MR. BRUSEKER: You'd have to ask your rural MLA, I guess.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Currently we're seeing – and I suppose it's a crisis right across North America – a rural depopulation. Alberta is 60 percent urbanized, with 40 percent still residing in the rural area. How long do you propose to keep your formula if the trend continues? If we continue having increased rural depopulation and increased urbanization of the province, at what point do we change seats?

MR. DREESHEN: I think, as Rod McDermid mentioned earlier, that if we start putting the control and moving that control toward the urban centres, it starts a landslide toward those. One of the things I appreciate from the rural redevelopment program – and I'm not sure that is the term – the initiatives that have been set up for diversification and trying to get people to stay in rural Alberta have got to be one of the prime factors. If we don't succeed in that, then we've got a lot of big problems. I suppose to answer your question – you know, is 60/40 right for the percentages for cities versus the rural at this point in time? – I think we have to make some alterations. The only way you're going to keep people there is if they recognize that the representation they have is consistent with the problems out there. In my opinion, the problems you people as legislators address constantly affect rural Alberta much more than urban.

MR. SIGURDSON: Sixty percent of the population would probably disagree with you.

MR. DREESHEN: That may be.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's the problem.

MR. SIGURDSON: That is the problem.

MR. DREESHEN: But here's where the difficulties lie, out here. As I was saying, once you people can get together and say, "Okay, we've decided this is going to be the city dump" and we go from there, that's one problem. But each MLA in their rural area has to contend with that or try and move it somewhere else or whatever they're going to be able to do. These are political problems. They come about because of the diversity of the people and the community they're representing, and I don't think we can stick with the formula in addressing: should we change the boundaries or should we stay with the same? You know, maybe there should be some changes in certain areas, but not wholesale changes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam and Stock.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. Are you implicitly arguing that if you have more urban MLAs than rural MLAs, the voice of the rural MLA would not be heard by the urban MLA? And if you are arguing that, do you argue that from political experience?

MR. DREESHEN: No, I don't believe that. It's a difficult one. I suppose in answer to that I would have to put more thought into it than . . .

MS BARRETT: You understand why I'm asking that. It seems to me you're saying: how can rural Alberta survive if we don't

have 50 percent of the seats in the House? Is this correct? Were you basically getting at that?

MR. DREESHEN: Yes, I think that is the point.

MS BARRETT: Okay. So the only basis upon which that argument could be logically construed is to assume the rural MLA just doesn't carry the same weight or isn't heard by the urban MLA.

MR. DREESHEN: I don't agree with your conclusion on that.

MS BARRETT: I'm not trying to force you into something; I'm trying to find the answer. I mean, you're not the only person who's said this. There are a lot of people who've said it. So what's gone wrong? Like, where is the real source of the problem?

MR. DREESHEN: Maybe it is simply a perceived problem. I'm not sure. But I would think that as other people - you know, we've heard the presentations. I think that from each and every point of view we've been looking at the importance of the rural representation. There's got to be something to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Roger, on this specific point.

MR. McDERMAND: Yes. Pam, I'd like to ask you: in reverse, what has gone wrong? Why are the urban areas growing at a much faster rate than we're losing in rural Alberta?

MS BARRETT: To the best of my knowledge, it would be related to the historical development of the industrial revolution. But it has happened in other epochs in history as well. I don't want to get into a historical debate; I'm asking a really legitimate question. I keep hearing people say, "If you dilute the numbers we have in the Assembly, you will ruin rural Alberta." I want to know what went wrong in the past, why that assumption is present, and is it strictly a numerical issue or is there something else here that isn't really being spoken?

MR. McDERMAND: May I make the suggestion that government is probably the fastest growth industry we have, and it is concentrated in Edmonton and Calgary.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. McDERMAND: And that is your responsibility.

MS BARRETT: That's really non sequitur, Rod.

MR. McDERMAND: It's as loaded as your first question though, Pam.

MS BARRETT: No, my question is not loaded. You people are making a certain representation here. I want to know what the real bottom-line concern is. How come you make the case that if your numbers are diluted, rural Alberta will be lost as we know it? Does that mean urban MLAs don't listen to rural MLAs?

MR. DREESHEN: Could I make a point on that?

MS BARRETT: Yeah, please.

MR. DREESHEN: As we've heard in the news reports in the last little while, the College of Physicians and Surgeons is looking at a situation where they may be limiting licensing for doctors. Now, if you are in an urban setting, you would look at a situation like that and say it looks as though human rights issues and things like that, which are paramount and our people are concerned about, are very significant. Yet if you go out into rural Alberta where we need to have as many doctors as possible, the human rights that are being neglected are the human rights of the people in rural Alberta. I suppose I look at that scenario as the type of thing where if it came down to a vote and nobody talked about it, the vote would be 42 to 41. That would be a situation where rural Alberta would be losing. Again, it's a situation, I think, that people have to look at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I want to get back on our speakers list. We had Stockwell first.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just following this point which Pam has some concern with and then tossing a question to you, Earl. I'll talk about perception, and we can all decide whether this is reality or not. There is indeed a perception that an urban MLA, on an issue related in or around his or her constituency, will have more support from the other MLAs just because they're concentrated in that area. As an example, we feel here in Red Deer that we need a new high school. This is just an example; I'm not firing up the high school issue. In Red Deer there are two MLAs, along with the boards, et cetera, pushing the minister for a high school. The perception in Red Deer is that Calgary recently got a new high school, and there were a number of MLAs pushing the minister with that particular . . . That is just a simple fact of life. That's reality. It's not that we don't listen to rural MLAs, but if Ty Lund has a concern about a dump in Rocky Mountain House, Ty Lund is going to be speaking to the rest of us but in isolation to a degree. If someone in Edmonton has a concern about a dump, there are going to be 16 MLAs speaking to the rest of us about that concern. So that is just a perceptive reality. It's not that you don't listen; it's just that to argue otherwise is to ignore reality and human nature.

I'd like to ask this question. We're talking about the shift from rural to urban. I read an interesting study done by Peter Drucker, who is involved in a number of best-selling books, *In Search of Excellence* and other things. He's seen as one of the foremost futurists. I'm not talking about a pie-in-the-sky, crystal-ball person but someone who analyzes trends and has spent a lifetime proving himself fairly successful in that analysis. As we move toward the year 2000, he is talking about a move away from the cities. In fact, he sees it happening first in the United States and secondly in Canada: people not liking the perceived ills of the city and moving 10 and 20 and 30 miles back from the urban areas because commuter traffic is going to be more accessible. Now, if that does happen, are you suggesting that the 50 percent be maintained, or if more people moved to the rural areas, would you say it should go up?

MR. DREESHEN: We have three submissions from the city of Red Deer and 22 submissions from outside. I'm sure that when that comes about, it'll be reversed. I suppose that would be my answer in that regard. I think we'll wait until that time and let the cities fight it out then.

MR. DAY: Okay. If I could ask one more quick question, Mr.

Chairman. I don't know if you represent the people here from the rural area. But to save – if I can use that word – a rural constituency, let's say a constituency on the border of Edmonton, would you have a problem with a chunk of that urban area in Edmonton being, you know, drawn into that rural constituency, thereby giving it 2,000 more people, thereby maintaining that constituency? Would you see a problem among the rural population with all of a sudden a slice of urban Edmonton not overweighing them but giving them numbers to maintain their constituency? Do you see a problem there?

MR. DREESHEN: No, I don't see a particular problem in that area. I think it's important, going the other way, maybe for some of the city MLAs to start recognizing some of the real problems the people in the agricultural area have as well. So if you're just talking about getting the numbers so we've got the magic 25 percent above or below, I don't think that's adequate justification for it. But certainly to have people representing all Albertans and not their little interest groups, you know, I think would be significant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Earl. We're going to take one more question and we'll move on to Jean.

MR. WHITING: Yes. Pam, you were asking about that perception. I think the perception, especially in rural Alberta, is that looking at the federal system, we find the power moves to where the votes are, where the representation is. They see the same thing happening, that the power will move into the urban areas. This is their fear. They have a working model to see. We have high interest rates to control inflation in central Canada, where it's a real problem here, and that's the model they're going from.

MS BARRETT: That answers a lot. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Earl. You certainly got things moving.

Jean, if you'd like to go to the microphone.

MS BARRETT: Didn't you present in Edmonton?

MRS. MacDONALD: No, I didn't present in Edmonton. We were just there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, Jean was there. She has the distinction of having been at another hearing.

MRS. MacDONALD: Thanks, Chairman Bob.

Yes, we were at another hearing. We went to listen and sort of got involved in some of the conversation. Just before I start the brief that I'm presenting, I am here representing ourselves, Sam and Jean MacDonald, who run a private resort, and I'm also going to give you a brief that was supposed to be presented by Sam as the vice-president of the private campground owners' association which represents the 100 campgrounds in the province that are privately run.

Just touching on the subject that was brought up by Earl, one thing that wasn't mentioned was the rural/urban scenario of our small towns in Alberta, similar to Edmonton and Calgary versus the rest of rural Alberta, in the effect of situations such as a regional recreation board with X number of persons on the board from the town and X number from the county. We have

found that it works much, much better to have equal representation from town and county on each of these boards. I guess that's sort of where we're coming from in our presentation here tonight. So what I'm going to do – I'm not going to give the preliminary of who we are. I'll just shorten up my brief here for you. I won't do both of them. They're kind of similar.

We believe in political equality for all residents of the province. Rural MLAs in Alberta have a workload that differs greatly from that of their urban counterparts in that, number one, they must serve several municipal councils, school boards, hospital boards, et cetera; number two, they are required to deal with a much wider assortment of constituent concerns than city dwellers; number three, they must travel through a much larger area than their rural counterparts, which is very demanding of their time and often on low quality road networks; number four, they are required to make a host of time- and money-consuming long-distance phone calls; number five, they must deal effectively with lesser facilities and services than in urban centres; and number six, they are expected by rural constituents to be available to them whenever they wish – in short, must deal with a greater degree of possessiveness than urbanites seem to demand. Therefore, we feel there must not be any boundary changes within the province of Alberta, because boundary changes would cost a lot of money, not in keeping with the provincial government's present fiscal restraint policy.

Rural MLAs are currently dealing with many more jurisdictions than their urban counterparts are, thus making many more demands on their time. For example, the Stettler MLA deals with 12 town councils, three summer village councils, four county councils, four major education boards, four hospital boards, et cetera, all of this encompassed in 2,916 square miles, and it is not nearly the largest. Urban MLAs likely deal with one council, one or two school boards, and possibly one hospital board.

Rural MLAs spend the major portion of their time driving, while urban MLAs can get from one end of their constituencies to the other in as little as 15 minutes.

Rural MLAs could not possibly meet the extended workload of larger constituencies due to their constituents' demands for individual attention. Rural residents know their representative and expect him to be available, as he is often their only contact with the government. Rural MLAs must be knowledgeable about a wider assortment of concerns and must be able to make these concerns known to other caucus members. If urban MLAs far outweigh the number of rural MLAs, these rural issues will not and could not be expected to be given equal treatment.

Summary: hereby be it known that we are not in agreement with any boundary changes at this time. Representation by population may work well in small, densely populated countries, but in Alberta it could only lead to adverse conditions between urban and rural residents. The situation is so complex and is working very well now with nearly equal representation, so let us not bring in legislation that will detrimentally affect our province. Representation must be, and is now, effective and fair. Please do not consider changing it to look proper and be ineffective and unfair.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter. Both briefs are similar, signed by the president of the other association.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Jean. Questions?

MS BARRETT: Yes, I have one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, go ahead.

MS BARRETT: Jean, I didn't get what you said about the lesser facilities for the rural MLAs. Do you remember that section that you said - I took a quote down - "lesser facilities." I just don't know what you were getting at there.

MRS. MacDONALD: Probably I'm meaning the major complexes in the city that you have: the arts, the cultural amenities.

MS BARRETT: Good. Thanks. Okay, that makes sense.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay?

MS BARRETT: Yup. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Thanks very much, Jean.

MRS. MacDONALD: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maurice.

MR. LEWIS: Mr. Chairman, I'm here to represent the county of Red Deer. My present position is deputy reeve, and this submission is from the county of Red Deer.

Mr. Chairman and members, we cannot overemphasize the concern we feel regarding electoral boundaries and the possibility that rural Albertans could face decreased representation in the provincial Legislature. I'm afraid I'm going to be reiterating many phrases and statistics that you've heard here tonight, but it appears to us that the time-honoured tradition of representation by population in our modern society and, in particular, our nation is not always a fair or an equitable scenario. One only has to be aware of this province's recent thrust for the Triple E Senate to realize the disparities that can arise in current political practices. A gentleman in the legal profession once advised a client who was grappling with his decision of revising his last will and testament that to be fair is not always to be equal, and, Mr. Chairman, we feel that perhaps that is the dilemma the committee finds itself in today as it looks for a solution through representation by population.

Mr. Chairman, we have considered the possibilities of realignment, the ramifications of the B.C. situation, the possibilities of a probable court challenge under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but we remain adamant that rural Alberta must retain the current level of representation in the Legislature. Please consider our own situation, the following statistics. I know you claim you can play around with statistics, but we'd like to shoot them at you anyway.

The county of Red Deer lies primarily within the boundaries of the Innisfail constituency. A large part of our northwest area, however, does lie within the Rocky Mountain House constituency. Currently some of the rural area adjacent to the city of Red Deer is within the boundaries of the urban ridings of Red Deer-South and Red Deer-North. In area we encompass 2,500 square miles. The county is approximately 34 miles wide and 74 miles long. We have a total population of 14,000 people, and within the county of Red Deer, excluding the city of Red Deer, are five incorporated villages and towns containing approximately another 8,500 people. When we assess the situation from the constituency boundary point of view, we find that in addition to encompassing seven-eighths of the county of Red Deer, the

Innisfail constituency also includes an area of approximately 170 square miles within the municipal district of Kneehill. I think from this, Mr. Chairman, the committee can visualize the distances our MLA has to travel to contact his constituents.

Another interesting fact which perhaps should be noted is that the county of Red Deer and the Innisfail constituency are supposedly within an area of the province where the density of population is relatively high. Yet as a rural riding, our representative is still subject to traveling long distances on constituency business. We question whether these distances even now are conducive to accessibility to the MLA by his rural constituents. Furthermore, of course, the inconvenience of long-distance telephone calls within the Innisfail constituency does add to more inconvenience and expense for both ratepayers and MLAs.

Within the boundaries of our constituency are numerous elected officials which our MLA deals with. There are three major rural municipalities, five incorporated villages and towns, three school boards, three hospital districts, with a combined total of 71 elected people. Add to this the local chambers of commerce and other interest groups specifically centred around the urban areas and one can easily see the consistent, continuous contacts the rural MLA has to keep.

Another item the committee might consider also is the fact that many of our rural MLAs, and not just ours in the Innisfail constituency, at present actually represent a significant percentage of urban population. We're not speaking only of the villages and towns within a rural municipality such as the county of Red Deer, but further consider Alberta's smaller cities such as Camrose and Wetaskiwin, to name just two.

In a rural community, Mr. Chairman, the entrepreneurship and individualistic nature of people becomes very apparent. Every farmer is a businessman, and throughout the rural and small urban centres small business thrives. Because of this and as a result of this, a tremendous involvement of individuals in communities' social, economic, and political organizations is a remarkable trait of rural people. The very nature of their lifestyle produces people who are knowledgeable, informed of current local, national, and international events and concerns, and who become involved in the political process.

I guess, Mr. Chairman, one point we would really like to make is that rural Alberta provides the basis for Alberta's economy and wealth: agriculture, the oil and gas industry, forestry and lumber and, last but certainly not least, our parks and recreation areas which play a vital role in the tourism industry of this province. We would urge the committee to consider all these factors and reflect on our concerns. Our rural population, we feel, must be fairly represented. It is inconsistent to suggest that Alberta needs equal representation at the federal level and then deny it at the grass-roots level in our own province.

In conclusion, we must reiterate with great emphasis that rural Alberta must retain its present representation in the Legislature. We must be represented on an equal basis with the urban population. We feel that we have indicated in this brief the importance of having and maintaining an equal voice in the affairs of this province.

The county of Red Deer would like to thank the committee for allowing us to make this presentation. We don't have any solutions, but thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Maurice.

Questions? Okay.

MR. LEWIS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Margaret.

MRS. McPHEE: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Margaret McPhee. I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this evening. I realize I'm going to be repeating many points that have already been made, but I took the time to write this and I'm going to take the time to read it.

I'm not representing any particular group or organization. I'm speaking as a rural Albertan who feels very strongly about preserving the voice and maintaining the strength of rural Alberta. I'm sure the present government in this province shares this concern. The Hon. Helen Hunley, Lieutenant Governor, in her Speech from the Throne, June 1, 1989, stated:

My government remains deeply committed to maintaining the well-being of rural Alberta.

I do not feel that deciding our representation in the provincial Legislature based on population alone would be looking after the well-being of rural Alberta.

As I understand the mandate of your committee, and as it states in your handout tonight, it's to establish a basis on which the [people] of Alberta may best be represented by their Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I stress that phrase "may best be represented." I urge you not to make population the only criterion.

I base my plea on the following arguments. Number one, the spin-off effect. If representation by population is enforced provincially, then it will flow down to electoral divisions in rural municipalities and from there on down to boards and committees. In time, the membership majority on all councils and boards would be held by urban residents. When cost-sharing is based on equalized assessment, a community may be a large contributor financially to an agency but may, because of a small population, have little representation on the board of that agency. Rural needs, as in the case, for example, of care for our seniors, can be substantially different from urban needs. We must keep our rural perspective on our boards and agencies.

Human rights is an important issue in today's society. We try to protect the rights of those with special needs. Perhaps rural Albertans have special needs too.

Is representation by population going to be the only basis for determining federal representation as well? Statistics Canada tells us that 34 percent of Canada's population lives in the immediate vicinity of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver and that this percentage figure is rapidly growing. The reasons they give for this are that our immigrants settled there to be near their countrymen and to find jobs. Our own rural young people are migrating from our rural areas to find jobs and pursue their careers in our cities. Will we then eventually only have representation from these areas in our federal government? If representation by population is decided by the courts of our land to be the only fair and equal method of determining representation, then this may well happen. I find the prospect frightening. Is that not why we're fighting for equal representation in our Senate right now?

My second point is the interchange with other elected officials. The present government has said that rural economic development is a priority and has accepted the concept of diversification of rural Alberta. Many of its programs are described as partnerships with municipalities. It would follow, then, that a significant portion of an MLA's time is spent working with local elected officials to make these partnership programs work. In Alberta we have improvement districts, special areas, municipal districts, counties, summer villages, villages, towns, and cities.

Many MLAs have some of each of these within their constituency boundaries. In an urban riding the MLA may have one alderman or at most one council to deal with. If an MLA is spread too thin, how can he or she do justice to these partnerships? One-to-one communication with local elected officials becomes almost impossible.

My third point is the distances involved. Many rural constituencies, although they have a low density of population, are very large geographically. Where an urban MLA can drive from one boundary of his constituency to the other in a matter of minutes, a rural member may have to spend many hours to accomplish the same thing.

My fourth point tonight is heritage. Let us not forget that the people who settled this province overcame great adversity to clear and farm this land. They had to come first to make the need for the schools, the churches, the businesses, and the towns. From these ancestors sprang the strong, independent, resilient people who are today's Albertans. We all know that we can't put more farmers back on the land. If anything, with increased technology and management skills farmers will be able to manage larger and larger operations. They have to in order to make it economically feasible to farm. And I know. I am one, or my husband is: we are. Nor do we want our good agricultural land fragmented with residential acreages and commercial ventures. It was economic necessity then, not choice, that caused the erosion of our rural population.

I would like to remind you of one more statement made by the Hon. Helen Hunley, this time from her February 17 Speech from the Throne. She said:

Alberta draws great strength from the many rural communities on which the province was founded and from the dynamic agricultural industry that powers these communities.

I say to you: let us not erode that strength or lessen those dynamics.

I know that your recommendations will only be made after very careful deliberation and in an effort to be fair and just to all who live in Alberta. I don't envy you your task. I do know, however, that once something is lost, it's very difficult to ever get it back. I know that I speak for many of the silent majority of Albertans when I implore you to very seriously consider using more than just population as the basis for determining how we're to be represented in the Legislative Assembly of our province.

Thank you for your attention this evening and your consideration of my brief. Respectfully submitted, Margaret McPhee, a concerned rural Albertan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Margaret. Before you go away, there may be some questions.

MRS. McPHEE: Questions? I didn't think there'd be questions. Sorry about that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm glad you took the time to read it. As you said, you took the time to write it, so you were going to read it. I'm glad you did.

Questions from panel members? Okay. Anyone else? All right.

Thanks very much, Margaret.

MRS. McPHEE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Charlie.

MR. CUTFORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the select committee. My name's Charlie Cutforth, and I am the county administrator for the county of Ponoka. Incidentally, being a self-admitted bureaucrat, I hope that doesn't take away from the impact of the report. It is, in fact, presented on behalf of county council and . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. CUTFORTH: The county of Ponoka has reviewed very carefully the concerns facing the Legislature – and all Albertans, for that matter – related to the electoral boundaries issue presently before us. Certainly we're aware of the recent ruling in B.C. that has precipitated the immediate need for this review process, and we greatly appreciate the opportunity to present our observations and recommendations.

The county council is very concerned – and I'm not sure that this has really been put in this perspective at least – that too much emphasis be placed on a we/they or urban versus rural argument during this review and in the final establishment of the boundaries. In fact, the urban and rural areas have far more in common than they have disparities. They are to a large extent very dependent on each other and therefore should not be seen as two independent worlds. In fact, it's been mentioned that a lot of the rural population is migrating to the cities. In other words, we have rural people living in the cities. On the other hand, particularly in the county of Ponoka – we may be somewhat unique in this regard, but in fact our population in the rural area is growing – we have a steady increase in subdivisions in the rural areas, where urban people want to live in the country and enjoy country living.

All things being equal, the county of Ponoka does agree with the principle of representation by population. However, in Alberta the population varies very dramatically across the province, and obviously regional interests are extremely diverse, as has been emphasized over and over again. Further, there is no mechanism in place to address these regional disparities, such as a federal government would have with a federal Triple E Senate. In fact, the only method of addressing regional interests in large physical areas of the province with low population is through special consideration when establishing electoral divisions. Certainly we've looked in some detail at the present boundaries, not only in the rural areas but also in the urban centres, and there are adjustments that can be made, we feel, in both urban and rural boundaries to somewhat accommodate that 25 percent. However, it's our view that, regardless, there is going to ultimately end up to be a certain area of the province that is very sparsely populated but does incorporate a large area, and somehow the province is going to have to address that with special consideration.

As I say, the solution to the representation problem is obviously a very difficult one. The county is adamantly and absolutely opposed to increasing the total number of seats in the Legislature and, subsequently, the associated bureaucracy and additional costs. Alternatively, to reduce the number of rural seats is not feasible in terms of rural constituents having reasonable access to their elected representative. We've listed also all of the concerns related to the number of municipal councils, boards, health units, seniors' foundations, the chambers of commerce, and the various community groups that they also have to serve, obviously. It's not necessarily that we're saying, as Mr. Sigurdson pointed out, that a rural MLA serves more groups or people, but they certainly spend more time in their

vehicle getting to them, and that's our primary concern. To expand the size of the constituencies to increase the population and thereby reduce the rural seats in the Legislature would, in most cases, make the role of the MLA impossible to fulfill adequately.

In summary, the county of Ponoka believes that although the existing system is anything but flawless, it is far superior to that which would create additional seats or reduce rural seats purely for potential political benefit of some at the expense of all Alberta ratepayers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing this submission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Questions? Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I just have one. When you talk about the only method of addressing regional interests, do you think the form of executive government, cabinet ministers, could be used to better facilitate regional concerns inside executive government, so that there may be more cabinet ministers from – well, throughout Alberta, but certainly with an emphasis of looking at rural Alberta? Perhaps that's where there should be a guarantee of representation?

MR. CUTFORTH: That's certainly an alternative, and I think that certainly would be an improvement in some cases already, not to the existing situation. On the other hand, I do believe that people in Alberta see themselves as Albertans whether they live in Edmonton or whether they live in Cardston or on the Blood Reserve. In my opinion, at least, all those people are entitled to representation in the Legislature. I don't see us, and certainly the council does not see Albertans, as two different entities. You know, I think you could probably go around this room and find that people have either moved from a rural area to an urban centre or vice versa. Certainly most people have lived in both, or at least their heritage has. So I'm not sure this emphasis on the we/they concept really has any significance whatsoever. There has to be some guideline, we agree, but certainly in those remote areas there has to be some special consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Anyone else? Thanks again, Charlie.

I believe we have one more individual who cannot be here on the 22nd, and there are three presenters yet from Rocky Mountain House.

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So if we could deal with those four, and that's on the understanding that everyone else who has not yet made a presentation could be back on the evening of Thursday, February 22. I understand we now have the room confirmed.

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, we do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At 7 p.m.?

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes; 7 till 9.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we'll be back.

Bob, can you read the names? If the names don't tally with what you believe is right, put your hand up and we'll discuss it.

MR. PRITCHARD: Wayne Alton, Lou Soppit, David McDonald, and Jean Graham.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So I'm assuming anyone else who has not yet presented a brief tonight is able to come back on the 22nd. We don't want anybody going away feeling that we've not heard you or not given you a chance.

Yes?

MR. SEVERTSON: I think Rose would like to go tonight. Have you got room for one more?

MRS. GRAHAM: Well, I can . . . We can certainly wait.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you wait?

MRS. GRAHAM: Yes, we're in no hurry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, if that's all right, Jean. Thanks very much.

MR. SOPPIT: Yeah, we can wait too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're sure, Lou?

MR. SOPPIT: Uh huh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. All right. Well, that's fine. We can handle four, I think.

Come on up. Thanks very much. I appreciate your cooperation.

Okay, we'll proceed, then, with Wayne.

MR. ALTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Initially I wrote a letter to Bob Pritchard, the senior administrator, requesting further meetings throughout central Alberta. I have had meetings with various service clubs, school boards, and municipalities in our east-central Alberta area. If you look at the map - we have all looked at the maps - the bigger problems are in east-central Alberta. So I wrote a letter, and I'll read that letter. I've made some additional comments, and I will supplement it by written submissions when I receive further documentation from the province of Manitoba. In that regard, I've talked with Don Orchard, the Minister of Health from the province of Manitoba, who represents a rural area in Manitoba, who is deeply concerned over their particular legislation and made a number of representations.

So to go to my letter, I write, and these are my own, personal views:

The writer wishes to advise the Committee that I am concerned over the lack of meetings in East Central Alberta. In particular, the constituencies that will most be affected by any particular realignment are in fact the eastern constituencies of St. Paul, Lloydminster, Vegreville, Vermilion, Viking, Wainwright, Stettler, Chinook, Bow Valley and Cypress/Redcliff.

The writer is a resident of the Town of Stettler and we note that the closest meetings are Hanna, Red Deer and Viking.

The writer is presently preparing a written brief and is obtaining information from across Western Canada dealing with this issue.

Further, the writer has been involved in the political process to the extent of contesting the nomination for the provincial party . . .

I would appreciate the opportunity of addressing the Committee on this issue. I can advise that I did address [this

very] Committee [some] eight years ago . . .

The writer is concerned over the arbitrary rules that are set as guidelines in this area and in particular, it is the writer's view that the 25% factor should not be used across Alberta and a different factor can be justified in rural constituencies as opposed to the urban constituencies. [I say] it is justifiable, acceptable and legally supportable pursuant to Section 1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which indicates that all of the laws can be subject to reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

That is the provision of section 1 of the Charter. And there are many infringements of rights that are allowed by the courts of this land on the basis of section 1 of the Charter.

I would submit to the Committee that a distinction between rural and urban [constituencies] can be justified due to a multitude of factors to ensure ease of access to the elected official with due consideration being given to the expense of the overall operations of our democratic process.

I would further submit in this particular legal matter that the civil law section of the Attorney General's department should be instructed to review the legal principles in this matter - the particular B.C. court case, the ramifications of section 1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms - and look to justifying a difference and different rules for rural and urban constituencies.

In particular, we must look to the cost of long distance communication with the electorate, the travelling expense, the relative increase and decrease in rural and urban constituencies trends, and population shifts. I noted when I talked with Don Orchard from Manitoba that he said there were some studies that indicated that the rural population shifts had reversed and, in fact, there were increases in population in the rural constituencies. In this particular I note that due to a lack of higher-education facilities, east-central Alberta has a significant number of eligible voters, namely students. Although resident in rural constituencies, they are residents of urban constituencies through the school year.

Further, the writer would suggest that the Committee look at creating [a number of] new urban ridings, looking at the total discrepancies after creating a number of new urban ridings before you realign the rural constituencies. We have been waiting for some recalculations in that regard. If we were to create a number of constituencies - in particular, if you look at those charts again in Edmonton, Calgary, and Medicine Hat, then redo the calculations and look at the minus 25 percent factor and in fact even a minus 35 percent factor, again I believe it can be justified by section 1 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Further, I think we should look to the long-distance calls dealing with the number of counties, numerous school boards, and hospital boards, not to mention a multitude of municipal councils, which create a formidable task for the MLA.

Further:

As a citizen of Stettler, the writer would also be making representations, with supporting material, to show that Stettler is the major centre in our constituency and is the major centre in East Central Alberta and should remain so after any realignment.

I ask for further meetings; I know there are people in east-central Alberta who are concerned.

To summarize, then, the people of east-central Alberta request further opportunities to be heard, and I would submit that the following steps should be taken.

One, review the decisions on this issue throughout Canada; what have other provinces done and why? I see from decisions in your earlier meetings that you have met in other provinces. I commend you in that respect.

A review by the Attorney General's department of the legal arguments to justify a minus 35 percent factor of the average.

Consider creating a number of new urban ridings, then recalculate the percentages and decide whether we can maintain our present rural constituencies. I wrote this tonight, so bear with me.

Allow the rural constituencies with a larger overall square mileage additional funds to cover the expenses of an MLA. As I understand, the federal MPs, the larger constituencies federally, there is special compensation including – and due consideration should be given, without question, to mobile phones, toll free, and fax machines: an absolute necessity, as I see it in my legal profession.

Consider the trading areas and natural geographical boundaries together with county boundaries, as well as toll free areas, when the actual boundaries are drawn.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Wayne.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Wayne, I have one question just for clarification. Where other people are arguing about maintaining the current ratio, you seem to be willing to move away from the ratio, so that you would maintain the current number of rural constituencies with the possibility of increasing the number of urban constituencies.

MR. ALTON: What's your question?

MR. SIGURDSON: I just wanted it for clarification. So you want to maintain the same number of rural constituencies and their present size, and in order to try and bring down those in the high end, which are urban constituencies, you would increase the number of urban constituencies?

MR. ALTON: That's correct. I think there are two things to be kept in mind. The actual definition of a rural constituency is something we haven't really decided upon. What really is an urban constituency when you have cities like Drumheller, Fort McMurray, and Lethbridge? There are major cities that have to be considered in that calculation. When I looked at the actual numbers, I concluded that at the present time there are more rural constituencies than urban. That was just my math. So I said, as a rural constituent: we still can afford a number of new urban constituencies. Yes, we talked with many, many people in east-central Alberta and they don't like increasing government, but that's the lesser of two evils as they see it. And keep that in mind. The constituencies of 31,000 people are very difficult from an urban MLA's point of view, and don't underestimate their obligations. What you have to do is look at the total number of people you represent, and once you get over 25,000, I don't care where they are, you have a formidable task.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Anyone else? Okay. Thank you, Wayne.

MR. ALTON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: David.

MR. McDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First off, let me say that the municipal district of Clearwater welcomes the opportunity to submit their views on the electoral boundaries.

The MD of Clearwater No. 99 covers an area of better than 18,500 square kilometres, most of which is comprised of uninhabited or sparsely inhabited foothill and mountain wilderness. In excess of 80 percent of the area of the municipality west of Rocky Mountain House is within the green area classification and is, for the most part, sparsely populated. As a result, portions of the municipal boundaries are currently contained within six provincial constituencies: Drayton Valley, Lacombe, Olds-Didsbury, Ponoka-Rimbey, Rocky Mountain House, and West Yellowhead.

It is noted that the municipality recently underwent a similar boundary review process as a result of then Minister of Municipal Affairs Julian Koziak requiring all counties and municipal districts to adjust their divisional boundaries within a 25 percent variance before the 1986 local election. We therefore can understand some of the issues that are now being raised before the select special committee. It is difficult to understand and support the rationale for the establishment of the 25 percent of the variance of the average population for each constituency, especially when considering sparsely populated areas. Other factors must be considered: access to representatives, geographical limitations, elected local authorities, and representation of the area.

To assign electoral boundaries solely based on population would result in equal distribution but not necessarily equal access or representation. Despite efforts by the provincial representative to establish community links, whether it be manifested in the form of a physical office or through frequent public forums, the sheer size of the constituency may prevent the voters' needs from being communicated to the provincial Legislature.

In our particular case the boundaries stretch 250 kilometres in an east-west direction and 180 kilometres in a north-south direction, and this is not one of the larger constituencies. The Member of the Legislative Assembly cannot hope to meet with his or her constituents on a regular basis because of the physical limitations imposed. Nor, more importantly, can the message from the area residents be communicated in an effective manner on a one-to-one basis with the representative. Factors such as toll charges – and these can be very important to the constituency office – and the time commitment for the drive to the local office provide real deterrents that are not present for urban constituents. Representation by population is therefore not equal. Extraordinary commitment is also required from the provincial representative in his movement from Edmonton to his home base. Greater time allocation is required. This can effectively be reduced where air transportation is an option; however, this is not always the case. This problem can further be compounded where the existing road network can also effectively limit travel.

In order for the provincial representative to understand his or her constituents' needs, he must be prepared to sacrifice his commitment to his government duties in Edmonton. This is not a fair demand, nor should it be required. The rural Member of the Legislative Assembly must be able to participate on an equal basis with his urban counterpart.

It is also noted that the provincial representative in a rural riding has an increased number of corresponding municipal representatives. Where in an urban riding the Member of the Legislative Assembly may only have to communicate to one

alderman, a hospital representative, a public school trustee, and a separate school trustee, the opposite is true in a rural riding – and I guess you've probably heard this before tonight, haven't you? In our particular situation the provincial representative has over 120 counterparts on the local scene. This includes three town councils, two villages, four summer villages, one municipal district, three counties, five hospital districts, three public school districts, and four separate school districts. Sounds like I'm making a pitch for his pay increase. The difficulties in communicating to this group of people can prove onerous, yet communicating with these groups is a must.

In the decision of Dixon versus the Attorney General of British Columbia, it is noted that there is a great variance on population deviations. For instance, the federal ridings are based on a permitted deviation of plus or minus 25 percent. Provinces vary from 15 percent in Saskatchewan to no fixed limits in British Columbia. In fact, Sir John A. Macdonald, introducing the Representation Act of 1872, drafted the rationale for apportioning electoral boundaries, and I quote:

In determining the mode of distributing the new seats, the Government took into consideration the principles which have guided the establishment of the elective system in the Provinces ever since they have been Provinces; and it will be found that, in them all, while the principle of population was considered to a very great extent, other considerations were also held to have weight; so that different interests, classes and localities should be fairly represented, that the principle of number should not be the only one. This was established in 1791 with respect to the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, where there were certain proportions of rural constituencies established, and a certain number of counties, so that the agricultural population might be represented and also the manufacturing and commercial and town populations.

This clearly outlines the criteria for distribution of electoral seats. It is noted that Dixon versus the Attorney General of British Columbia concurred with this view. This was again stated in an Australian decision, and again I quote:

To ignore community of interest in the creation of electoral divisions and to insist on mere equality of numbers will be likely, in my opinion, to produce inequality rather than equality of voting value.

MR. DAY: Excuse me, Dave. Where was that quote from?

MR. McDONALD: It's in the written submission. It's from Australia.

MR. DAY: That's Australia?

MR. McDONALD: Yes.

While it is recognized that some limit must be placed on variance so as to ensure equality of vote as guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, there must also be some recognition of the arbitrary nature in establishing variance limitations. It is suggested that the province of Alberta has currently met both criteria. Although the Rocky Mountain House constituency currently has less than the average number of eligible voters and in fact has less than the magic 25 percent variance, circumstances as previously outlined dictated the boundaries. It is noted that the present legislation does not specify that the rural electoral divisions abide by the 25 percent rule.

The municipal district, while recognizing the limitations imposed by equal representation by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, would argue for a similar criterion for

rural municipalities. The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act specifies that

the Commission shall endeavour to avoid establishing proposed rural electoral divisions that are larger than the existing electoral divisions in those [sparsely populated] areas.

This section of the Act would have to be waived if the commission did wish to recommend radical changes to the present electoral divisions.

It is noted that the municipality is opposed to any changes in the electoral boundaries which result in the loss of rural representation. The province of Manitoba have adjusted their boundaries so that an elected official represents both urban and rural residents through their 'spokewheel' distribution model, and we've heard that discussed tonight by several speakers. Let's say that it causes us some grave concern that dilution of the rural vote can become very significant through that method, in that the hub of the spoke is really where the people seeking election have to concentrate their efforts, and you can, in effect, disenfranchise those rural people on the outside. That has, from what I can find out, happened in the Winnipeg area, or certainly the rural people around Winnipeg feel this happened. This does not serve the rural interests through this process of dilution of rural vote.

It can be argued that so-called rural electoral divisions are already not rural in nature. For example, the cities of Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie are included in the so-called rural ridings. Let us not further weaken the voice of the rural resident. Rural residents do have special interests: environment, conservation, transportation, and resources, to list a few. I submit that I totally recognize these are concerns of urban people too, but when you're living in the middle of it, they can more directly affect you; they become less academic and more real.

The council for the municipal district would also urge the select special committee to consider the physical limitations of the Legislature Building when considering adjusting the number of representatives. As part of the government's program of fiscal restraint no case should be made for increasing the number of seats beyond what can fit within the present building. Costs are associated with increasing the number of representatives. Besides the salaries and expenses, support staff and office space are also significant costs. Nor should the select special committee recommend reducing the number of seats in the Legislature. The workload for the individual Member of the Legislative Assembly would increase in direct proportion to the reduction of the number of representatives. Committee work is an integral part of the responsibility. Less representatives means less dedication and commitment or, at least, a dilution of the dedication and commitment to these assigned committees.

By virtue of these circumstances it can be argued that there are two classes of citizens or two categories of citizens. Again, in my written submission we use the term "rural and urban." I really wonder if perhaps we shouldn't change that term to "rural and small urban and major metropolitan." I really think that's what we're talking about, not rural and urban.

The rural electors must overcome all these factors in order to communicate to their representatives their needs, none of which are present for the urban elector. Voting is only one part of the duties of the electorate, one that comes up on average every four years. In the interim period the responsibilities of the resident are just as important and cannot be ignored.

Finally, it is noted that the province of Alberta is dissatisfied with the federal method of representation, yet by virtue of this review they are attempting to create a parallel system. This may

result in rural alienation from the urban majority comparable to the present feeling of western Canadians to the rest of Canada. Let us not adopt this model of reform.

The municipal district thanks the special committee for this opportunity to submit their views on the electoral divisions. Thus endeth my formal presentation, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to add a comment though. I think when we get through the various platitudes and sanitized phrases, what we're really discussing here is political power. Right now we have a fairly equal split in Alberta, and any political party or group of people with a particular philosophy who feel that Alberta would be better governed by people of that philosophy has to have a very strong base in one or the other of those bases, the rural or the major metropolitan, but also has to make serious inroads in the other before they can gain power or, at least, gain a comfortable majority. To deviate from that is to end up with a situation where the rural voter could in fact be disenfranchised and the government could be elected simply from the major metropolitan areas without any support or any significant support from the other, or vice versa. In this search for power perhaps I would really ask that you take a longer look at what is good for Alberta down the road, 20 years from now, not just next year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Dave.
Questions or comments? Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I've been meaning to ask this of other people. I didn't do it, and I apologize for doing it to you. Somehow people aren't talking about the relative size of some of the constituencies that are depicted in pink, some of them being large and some of them being small. Everybody makes the same case about the geography, et cetera, and that's true enough. I mean, no one would deny that. But in all that you said, is there nothing you would do to redress even that sort of imbalance?

MR. McDONALD: Yes, I think there is some tinkering, some fine-tuning possible. But I think the point we want to make is: let's keep the point of reference at this basic half-and-half split. Now, perhaps that can be a plus or minus 5 percent, a 55/45 if you will, as population shift. But at least that forces any political party to make inroads on both sides. It gives both sides a strong voice.

The question you asked earlier about why the rural people feel the urbans won't listen to them – perhaps I could just give a brief personal experience. When we met with the committee on the municipal statutes review, there was a suggestion by some of the urban members – and they're very well-meaning, intelligent, dedicated individuals – on rural land assessment, on farm land assessment, that it be based the same as any other assessment, on the value the land can be sold for. And in our own situation west of Rocky Mountain House – for instance, my own place – I live on the land that was homesteaded by my great grandfather. It's right on the banks of a very popular trout fishing stream. I could sell that land for much more than I could ever make off it farming, but that isn't my wish. It's perhaps my deepest wish that someday I can turn that land over in better shape than I found it, as my predecessors did. If I was taxed on what I could sell that land for, or assessed, it would force me off. It would probably force off a third of the farmers west of Rocky Mountain House because of outside influences that have nothing to do with the income I can derive from the land, and

all these urban people don't realize – there's a lack of understanding. It's both ways. I don't understand the problems . . .

MS BARRETT: Were you able to convince them though? I mean, that's the bottom line.

MR. McDONALD: Well, I don't know. The Municipal Statutes Review Committee isn't done yet.

MS BARRETT: Oh, okay.

MR. McDONALD: I admit the ignorance is as equal on the other side. I have no comprehension of the problems you face as a representative of a metropolitan area, but I think that as long as the power base is equally shared, we have a much better chance of having to listen to one another.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. SIGURDSON: In that you deviated at the very end of your presentation, I want to present to you a scenario that happened recently in a neighbouring jurisdiction. One political party had more votes than the other political party, but because they were situated in such a way, the party with less votes has formed the government. Do you think that's fair?

MR. McDONALD: I'd have to know more about what you're talking about.

MR. SIGURDSON: Recently there was an election held in a neighbouring jurisdiction. There were two political parties primarily involved. The party that lost the election had more votes than the party that won the greatest number of seats. They had more votes and they were urban based, but because there were more provincial constituencies in the rural part of that province, the party that won the election had fewer votes in more constituencies. I just want a comment on . . .

MR. McDONALD: I would think that as long as we maintained that half-and-half split or something very close, the likelihood of that happening in Alberta would be very slim.

MR. SIGURDSON: It was about half-and-half.

MR. McDONALD: I guess I can only refer to a quote that democracy is the worst form of government other than any of the rest. It's certainly not perfect, but let's not make it even less perfect.

MR. DAY: I might add to that, Mr. Chairman. That's not uncommon in jurisdictions, either North American or other ones, where you have a high concentration of people, very high let's say, in one constituency, just as an example, but four other constituencies vote the other way. The actual numbers, indeed, could be higher, but in terms of constituencies, you know, it switches over. So that's not an uncommon thing to happen.

MR. McDONALD: Perhaps we can have our plus or minus 25 but – and I don't like the word "classes" – two categories of constituencies.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's been raised at other hearings, David, the idea of having an urban and a rural formula.

MR. McDONALD: Those terms need work, I think.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Okay. Thank you very much, David.

Lou.

MR. SOPPIT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members of the committee, I shall be brief, because we've had many long-winded ones ahead of us and the hour is growing late and we all want to go home.

MS BARRETT: Not to put too fine a point on it.

MR. SOPPIT: So I'll skip over my preamble and just go down into the meat of my presentation: the fact that we do not agree with the percentage factor that was in your recent letter sent to us in the town of Rocky Mountain House. This statement is made considering the fact that in the Rocky Mountain House constituency our MLA has to hear the needs of approximately 70 to 100 local elected officials representing hospital boards, public and private school boards, senior citizen lodge boards, and both rural and urban councils. The traveling in the rural areas to respond to the people and their needs is very time consuming.

In light of the stand taken by the political parties in Alberta on Senate reform, it certainly would appear that regardless of population people have the right to equal representation. It is our position that if the boundaries are adjusted, regardless if they are urban or rural, the representation would not be equal considering the size of the constituencies. We would recommend that if the boundaries are to be adjusted, rural and urban should be considered separately. In fact, we feel that the proper system is the way we are represented this time.

I would leave that with you on behalf of the town of Rocky Mountain House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Questions? Comments?

MR. SOPPIT: See; I was brief. I'll let you go home.

MR. DAY: You'd get elected with short speeches like that.

MRS. VAN DER VELDEN: Mr. Chairman, committee members, thank you very much for the opportunity to bring our concerns to you this evening.

While there is pressure for changes in electoral boundaries, there will be definite adverse effects on rural constituencies. Briefly my concerns are, first, that large and already widespread constituencies would make it difficult for an MLA to physically cover the area effectively. For example, the MLA for the Innisfail constituency presently serves seven councils, three hospital districts, and two school districts contained in a 74 by 40 mile geographic area.

Item two. A rural constituency has a broad diversity of interests which may include anything from trapping, forestry, and agriculture to the oil and gas industry, as well as the many concerns of the urban communities within its boundaries. To enlarge the geographic area of a constituency along with its increased diversity of interest makes it increasingly difficult for any MLA to effectively serve his electorate.

I'd like to address with two points here Mr. Day's comments earlier on as to why rural constituencies have a perceived

concern. I do not believe the rural concern of inadequate representation due to representation by population is just a perceived concern. Rather, as you mentioned, Mr. Day, you and your colleagues may consult with one another and support one another on items of mutual concern or agreement, which is certainly a plus for us. However, if these proposed changes do become law, we cannot depend on future MLAs to necessarily have the same outlook or the same attitude. We must go by what the law states, and we'll be looking 20, 30, 40 years down the road here.

Further to that, traditionally the present electoral boundaries have been both equitable and effective for the province as a whole. The province of Alberta has been a front-runner in Senate reform for very good reason. For many years we as Albertans have not felt that we have been effectively and equally represented at the federal level of government due to representation by population alone. It is ironic, then, that some should now want to bring this same system of representation to our province. To do so would create inequities and, I believe, a strong feeling of divisiveness within our own province. We must work together and not have a spirit of divisiveness. The issue of changes in electoral boundaries must not reflect the wishes of particular interest groups but must reflect the needs of all Albertans.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Rosalie.

Questions or comments from panel members? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Chairman, one of the things referred to throughout our hearings starting back in November was that all of the rural MLAs have to deal with so many municipal districts and hospital boards. I was just doing a rough calculation. I think the previous presenter said there were about 70 elected individuals that one member of the Legislature . . .

MR. SCOTT: Sixty-nine.

MR. SIGURDSON: Sixty-nine. I just thought, you know, if you take the number of constituents that can then speak to 69 individuals that go up to one MLA, that's not too bad. Because what happens in an urban area, if you use that same formula, is that you've got 31,000 people in one constituency that speak to one alderman that has to speak to one member of the Legislature. The problem is that those 31,000 people are trying to contact one or two individuals, whereas the other way around you've got 60 or 70 people that 12,000 people can contact. So there is that side of the coin as well. In rural Alberta, because you've got a sparser population with a greater number of elected officials, the feedline becomes far more like a pyramid, whereas in the urban centres what you've got is a spread out like that, two people purportedly being somewhere near the top.

MRS. VAN DER VELDEN: However, rural constituency MLAs have to deal with a much larger, widespread geographic constituency combined with perhaps a much broader range of diversity of interests. That is not to say a city does not have many interests. Yes, they do, but perhaps it's more focused compared to a rural area.

MR. SIGURDSON: I think it's quite heterogeneous.

MRS. VAN DER VELDEN: Pardon me?

MR. SIGURDSON: It's quite heterogeneous. There's a diversity of interests . . .

MR. SCOTT: If I can just comment on that, I think probably the point they're making is that a person has to get in touch with 69 people, where you're worried about maybe four or five people getting in touch with you and giving you all the concerns.

MR. SIGURDSON: No. A lot of what happens, though, is that . . . Again, not having the benefit of being a rural member of the Legislature, I don't know how many constituents contact the MLA directly. I would assume it's probably a great number. I certainly know it is in Edmonton. The problems deal with many things over which, in many instances, MLAs have no jurisdiction whatsoever. Because they don't know who the appropriate individual is to contact or who the appropriate reporting authority may be, an obvious choice is to go directly to a member of the Legislature and try and get the problem resolved. We, in turn, may direct it elsewhere. In many instances we try and handle it directly.

MR. SCOTT: But the fact remains that the MLA dealing in the rural - it is their job to get in touch with these elected officials which, like you said, in some areas is 69 where you're sort of receiving rather than attending.

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, at the same time we have our community leaders that again, because they're not publicly elected through any October election . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

I've got Stockwell and Pat and then one more in the back.

MR. DAY: Just on this point. Somebody - and I don't know if it was Mr. McDonald - in their presentation said that what we want to avoid in this whole discussion is a we/they approach, and for people who live in cities, their concerns are just as valid as people who live in the country. I can tell you from experience, from my observation in the Legislature, that a conscientious MLA, whether he or she is urban or rural, virtually works themselves to the limit in terms of hours per day. I'm not saying that to wave a flag of my colleagues or anybody. As a matter of fact, with some of my opposition colleagues, I wish they didn't work as hard as they do. But it is a fact, I think, that all of us need to appreciate. A conscientious MLA, urban or rural, works themselves to the limit. The one observation I have in terms of the answer to this problem - and we're hoping to get some from you, and we've gleaned some tonight - is that I know the answer is not more work for the rural MLA. I know that for a fact, because they, just like their urban counterparts, although there are unique differences, work themselves virtually to the limit as it is. So I think we need to avoid the we/they and keep pressing for that solution.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Rosalie, I was wondering if you had thought about a maximum physical area that an MLA should represent. You mentioned that Innisfail really shouldn't be expanded, and we've had presenters from Lacombe who said Lacombe shouldn't be expanded. Have you thought about an ideal?

MRS. VAN DER VELDEN: To be honest, no, I haven't, but I will certainly give that some consideration. I plan to give this report in writing to your committee, and if after some consideration I do come to a viewpoint on that, I will certainly include it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a standing invitation for anyone. I had mentioned it earlier with regard to one brief, I believe - in fact, it was the first one - where if you've got some further thoughts, some supplementary comments, if you can expand upon an idea that will be of help to us, please get it in.

Okay. There was a question here.

MRS. MUELLER: I think Mr. Day has answered my question. We've heard the complexities of the urban servicing his people, and I would like to bring out the rural complexities, their large area and the numbers of people to serve. I wonder if we could just take a moment to expand and maybe have a rural MLA speak on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Briefly, we can. Gary, or we've got Ty. Would either of you like to very briefly comment on the role of a rural MLA? Go ahead, Ty.

MR. LUND: Mr. Chairman, I've listened with interest to Tom's argument about other community leaders just because they're not elected. Don't forget we've got those too. In every area we have various rep boards, and within those rep boards we have all the different communities. Each one has their executives, and we have to deal with all of those. I think just as an example we'll give the municipal district of Clearwater, because I'm so familiar with that one. There are some 16 local communities. I have those as well as all the elected. So I think we can service those people, but our big problem is the time to get there, our travel. I don't know how many hours I spend on the road, but it's very substantial. That, I think, is one of the major problems with seeing our electoral boundaries expanded.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At our meeting in, I think it was, Grande Prairie, Glen Clegg, the Member for Dunvegan, indicated that he believes he spends about a third of his time with individuals in the constituency, about a third of his time with local governments, hospital boards, school boards, and so on, and the other third of his time traveling. I'm talking about his working time. But he spends about a third of the time traveling between individual appointments or board individual appointments.

Anything you wanted to add to that, Gary or Ron? Gary first.

MR. SEVERTSON: I guess the only thing is in reference to the problem of the too large and too many municipal districts. An example, like what Stock mentioned, of the school: you have two different school districts or three different hospital boards and they need hospitals. As an MLA you have to start prioritizing. So they know if you have three hospital needs, only one is going to be at the top of the list, whereas in a smaller, confined area, you don't have that problem because you only have one hospital or one school. The larger the area, though, you could be dealing with two or three different counties. That's where the problem comes: the logistics of dealing with that compared to one council.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Gary.

Ron, anything to add to what's been said?

MR. MOORE: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm coming back as a presenter on the 22nd.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. You'll hold your ammunition for that date. All right. Fine.

Now, do any panel members have any concluding comments to make? Stock.

MR. DAY: I just want to thank everybody for coming and staying with us. Well, actually I don't know if I want to thank you, because as much as you think all the presentations might have sounded the same, there were some very interesting points that came out here that have not come out in other places. The reason I don't want to thank you is that it just gives us more to try and juggle and sort out. I say that tongue in cheek though. Thank you very much. You've brought some excellent points that are going to work, hopefully, towards resolving the issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'd like to conclude . . . All right, go ahead, sir.

MR. RECKSEIDLER: Just one quick comment, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to also make a presentation on the 22nd. I was earlier on but I deferred, and I understand, because I'm close to Red Deer. But I think what I haven't heard this evening, and hopefully you have heard at other public hearings, is: what is meant by representation, and how is that process to work? I'm not sure what we mean by representation, and it has a bearing on how you distribute that kind of representation. What is representation, and how is it to be processed? I hope you get some comments. I'll be making some comments at another session.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Quickly, Rod.

MR. McDERMAND: Could I capsule a couple of things? One being that I came into this meeting feeling that there was an immediate need to do something. The background and the legal expertise we've gotten doesn't tell me that we have a need whatsoever. If you want to legitimize it, take it to the Supreme Court of Canada and legitimize it.

I guess the other thing is that a much wiser man than I, who spoke more eloquently, said, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I wanted to make my concluding remarks just to highlight some of the things a number of you said. You talked about access to your representatives or equality of access, which is a very key point. We've heard that on a number of previous occasions, but it was put very eloquently tonight. We're really talking about the quality of the representation. You ask us to give consideration to a combination of factors, not just population, and that has come out time and time again. You're saying: "Take into consideration the geography. Take into account the number of communities within the area." I think that in part answers the question where people are saying to us: "You must consider more than just the individual. You must look at what's involved, the number of communities, the number of wards, and so on."

Our heritage. I think that's the first time it's been put quite as eloquently as it was tonight: a reference back to our heritage, our roots, and not forgetting about them. Special consideration to the more sparsely populated areas of our province. We cited

examples in the Canadian system where there is special consideration given to not only the two territories but also Prince Edward Island so its number of House seats doesn't go below its senatorial representation. We know the laws as currently written in both British Columbia and Saskatchewan give special consideration to very low population areas.

Over and over we've heard about the Triple E Senate. It's a bit of a paradox. On one hand we're fighting for equal representation at the national level, and at the same time here we are looking at a more restrictive system. My colleagues and I understand and appreciate some of the frustrations you and others have in that area.

It's been put very succinctly tonight about the delicate balance we now have, for lack of better terminology, between urban and rural. And there may be a better way to categorize. We might have purely urban ridings, meaning metropolitan urban; we may have some like Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South that are urban/rural; or we may have others that are purely rural. We may have another category, rural sparsely populated or rural isolated. So there may be a range of terms that would more appropriately address the uniqueness of our 83 ridings as they currently exist. We heard you tell us - and this has been stated in other meetings as well - don't blindly go down a road because a judge has interpreted a ruling based on the Charter of Rights. Some have said, "If need be, take it directly to the Supreme Court." Rod, you just summarized that.

We have a heavy responsibility as a committee of seven. We want to be in a position to recommend back to our colleagues in the Assembly something that is fair and reasonable, that reflects the unique nature of Alberta, and we don't want it thrown out in the courts. To that end we've sought legal opinion. And we've had how many lawyers before us now?

MR. DAY: I was going to say too many, but you might misinterpret that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've had individuals forward, and it's fair to say that there is not a solid consensus on each and every issue. We get some varying opinions. We are doing our very best to ensure that the recommendations we do make are going to withstand a court challenge, but we're also committed to the very special fabric of this Alberta.

So again, thank you so much for coming out tonight. Thank you for making this the best attended hearing we've had to date. For those of you who are coming back and joining us on the 22nd at 7 o'clock, Stockwell will be in the chair at that time. If others wish to come back and listen, you're more than welcome to come.

What we will do is ensure that those who are here and have not made a presentation will be notified again by Bob Pritchard just on the specifics. Okay?

Thanks very much for coming out.

MR. LUND: I was just going to ask if other people that want to present can present on the 22nd, other than those that have registered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What we'll do is take the approximate 10 first, and whatever time permits, others can come. Okay? In other words, we'll accommodate others as long as we can.

[The committee adjourned at 10:22 p.m.]