

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[1:10 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to officially declare the meeting of the select committee on electoral boundaries open and, with that, a very special welcome to each and every one of you for coming out today. Those of you who are participating – I'm advised by Bob Pritchard that we have 27 briefs to be presented – have the distinction of having the largest number of briefs in any one hearing to this point in time. That speaks well not only for your MLA, who I know has worked hard to ensure that information on the process was distributed, but for all of you for taking the time from your schedules to come out and be with us today.

We have at least one and possibly two additional members of the committee coming. I'm not sure if they can't read road maps and are having difficulty getting to Hanna, but we have had a phone call from one, who has indicated she is on her way and that we should begin. One or more others may arrive, and if indeed that happens, we'll introduce them when they get here.

I'd like to stress at the beginning that while this is a select committee and therefore microphones are on the table at the front and everything is recorded, we don't want anyone to feel intimidated by the microphones. It's our intention to keep this as informal as possible. We want you to be comfortable. We want to hear from you, and to that end we will receive written briefs; we will receive oral briefs. If there's something you wish to add to what you've written, you may do so. We want to ensure that when you leave here today, you have a better understanding of the complex challenges facing this committee, and we want to ensure that we've heard from you and that we understand the points you are making.

At this time I'd like to introduce members of the committee who are here. I'll begin on my far left. Mr. Patrick Ledgerwood. Pat is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta. He's the gentleman who's responsible for conducting elections when general elections or by-elections are held, and he's also responsible for the enumerations which take place between elections. He is an *ex-officio* or an honorary member of our committee. We're delighted to have him on board because of his expertise not only in the Alberta side but also in the fact that he sat on the last federal redistribution commission, which increased the number of ridings in Alberta from 21 to 26, and he was involved in the map drawing at that time.

Next is Mr. Tom Sigurdson from Edmonton-Belmont. Tom is a member of the New Democratic Party, and he is one of their two members on this committee.

We have a seven-member committee. There are two members from the New Democratic Party, one Liberal, and four Conservatives. Each party selected its makeup on the committee. A question did come out last evening as to the makeup of the committee, and it's important you understand that.

As I have indicated, we expect one or more others to be with us today, and I'll introduce them as they arrive.

Bob Pritchard is our senior administrative officer, who will be handling the slides as we go through that presentation shortly.

It's apparent that even by extending our time today we're not going to be able to receive all 27 briefs in one afternoon. We know from past experience in Medicine Hat and last evening in Red Deer that you reach a saturation point at about the 15- to 18-brief level. Otherwise, people feel too constrained, and we don't want you rushing artificially through your brief. You've taken time to prepare your thoughts and ideas, and we want to ensure that you've got time to present the same to us.

One of the reasons Bob asked you to register when you came in is so we can get an indication of where your home community is, because if we have a large number of people here today from another community, then we might look at going back to that community. But with few exceptions almost all of the briefs are from those of you who live within the Chinook constituency. So it seems appropriate, then, that we will come back to Hanna, here in the Chinook constituency.

After we've heard from the six presenters who are at the table now, we will attempt to accommodate those of you who have traveled some distance. We have one from Wainwright, one from Stettler.

MR. PRITCHARD: Two from Drumheller.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We'll accommodate the out-of-towners first then, and then we'll try to ensure that we accommodate anyone who can't come back on a day – we'll have to get our heads together when we have a short coffee break to pick a follow-up date. So before you leave today, you'll know when we intend to come back.

There are two other introductions I'd like to make before proceeding: first is a long-time friend and colleague, a man who was elected to the Assembly the same year I was, Mr. Jack Butler – Jack, I know everyone knows you, but we want to acknowledge you – and the current MLA for the Chinook constituency, the Associate Minister of Agriculture, someone who is doing a terrific job in a very challenging portfolio, the Hon. Shirley McClellan.

Our two *Hansard* officials: they're the people who handle all the recordings for us and help us with our minutes. You should know that in this age of technological advancement we're able to identify all of the key points that are made in the various briefs so that when we sit down to actually deliberate and begin to prepare a report, if we want to know how many people raised Triple E Senate as a reason for a balanced representation in Alberta or how many talked about ensuring that community of interest is included, we'll be able to go back and pull that information. It's through the good work of Doug and Vivian over here who assist us with that. So they're also part of our team, and Robin Wortman, who works with Bob and is supposed to keep us on time.

If at any point in time you can't hear us at the back of the room or if you can't hear one of the presenters, if you'd wave your hand or give us a signal. Unfortunately, we don't have a microphone for the room today. We apologize for that, but we'll try to ensure that you're able to hear the briefs as they're being presented as well. That's important. Okay.

I'm going to give just a very brief background as to why the committee has been struck. Then I'm going to turn to my colleague Tom and ask Tom to lead us through the slides which Bob will show us. Then we'll get right into the presentations. Before I do that, are there any questions up to this point in time? Okay.

First of all, why are we here? It's important to recognize that we are not an Electoral Boundaries Commission. We are not drawing lines between constituencies. So if any of you have in your briefs made reference to where lines should be or that a polling station should be transferred from one constituency to another, we'd ask you not to highlight that. We will ensure that that information gets to the Electoral Boundaries Commission when it is struck, but that's not our task as a committee. Our task is to ensure that the recommendations which go back to the

Legislative Assembly are recommendations which will hopefully be put in legislation and will form the framework for the guidelines followed by the boundaries commission.

Now, in the past we've historically followed a rule in Alberta: seven urban voters equal four rural voters – 7 to 4. The reason that has been in place for many decades was to give a weighting factor for rural areas where you've got distance, geography, and a number of communities. That's worked very well, and we have not had complaints of discrimination or criticism from our urban cousins in the past that that was in some way an unfair system. But we did have a court ruling in our sister province of British Columbia where an individual took the B.C. government to court, arguing that under two sections of the Charter of Rights the variance between the most populated urban ridings and the most sparsely populated rural ridings was too great. The judge found in favour of the individual and, indeed, said, "Yes, they're too great, and you should not have a variance of more than plus 25 or minus 25 percent." We'll show you in the slides what it would mean to Alberta if we followed that ruling. There was a subsequent ruling that dealt with the time lines.

So the key reason we're here as a committee is that the three political parties represented in the Alberta Legislature got together and decided there had to be some examination of the background of the process before we went on to create an Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I'm going to pause at this moment and turn to Tom so that he may make an introduction.

Now, I understand as well that Jack Horner has just joined us. Jack is a former MP. There you are. Good to see you, Jack.

Tom will lead us through the slides. Go ahead, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm just going to move over to the side so that I can see what slide is up and you'll be able to hear me as well.

The first slide shows all of the constituencies listed alphabetically, and their voter population. The notation at the bottom points out that the 1,800 members of the Blood Indian Reserve, which is located in the Cardston constituency, did not participate in the enumeration. So the Cardston constituency, which has about 8,100 electors, is actually off by about 1,800 because of the Blood Indians not participating in the enumeration.

We've taken that slide and rearranged the constituencies numerically. You can see that the top constituency is Edmonton-Whitemud with 31,500 voters approximately, and the last constituency again is Cardston, with the anomaly, but there's about 8,100. So there is a great range between top and bottom. If we add all of the names on the voters lists, we get approximately 1,550,000 Albertans eligible to vote. If you divide that by the 83 electoral divisions, you have an average of 18,685. The McLachlin decision referred to by Bob Bogle said that there should be an allowance of 25 percent on either side of the average, so in Alberta that would mean, if we used that as the variable allowance, a top end of 23,356 voters per constituency, with a bottom end of 14,014 voters for a minimum number in each constituency.

Going back then to that slide that's got everything listed numerically, you can see that those constituencies highlighted in green are well above the average plus 25 percent. Those constituencies that are highlighted in pink are below the 25 percent variance, so below the average less 25 percent.

MRS. HANSEN: Are those greens all urban?

MR. SIGURDSON: All the greens are urban; all of the pink are rural.

Putting that onto a map of our province, you can see those constituencies that fall below the suggested permitted average. You can't very well see, but there are two green dots in there. One is Medicine Hat, and the other one is St. Albert, which is near Edmonton.

The city of Calgary. The periphery of the city is still growing. Lots are still for sale at \$45,000. If you've got enough money to buy a lot, you can move out into the periphery of the city and become part of a large constituency.

The city of Edmonton. Again, pretty much the same problem. The peripheries of the city are still growing.

Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West still fall within the average.

Medicine Hat, however, is, I think, the fourth largest constituency in our province, and there must be some adjustment there.

The constituencies of Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South are a bit of an anomaly. Or rather than saying "anomaly," I suppose I could say they're unique in our province. The brown line is the boundary of the city. In the last commission, 1983-84, there wasn't sufficient population in the city of Red Deer to create two urban constituencies, but there was too great a population to have just one constituency. So the commission at that point went out into the county of Red Deer and brought in some of the population that lives outside of the city of Red Deer, and they created the two constituencies of Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South.

There is the city of St. Albert. It still is growing and has a very large population as well.

Going back to the map of the province, if you look at these constituencies highlighted in purple, these constituencies are 35 percent below the average. You can see that we've got quite a number.

This slide with the constituencies in yellow shows those constituencies that have 50 percent below the average population, and there are five of those.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe you should just point out that Chinook, as you can all see, is one of the five constituencies.

MR. SIGURDSON: Chinook is one of them, yes.

The committee has been traveling throughout the province. These are the locations we have hit or will hit this month. Some of them are return engagements, as we'll probably be back to Hanna later on this month as well. Those are the dates of the meetings we've had. We've had quite a few, and we've got some distance to go yet. What we tried to do was attend those parts of the province that probably or possibly will be most affected by any changes that may happen to any electoral boundaries. So the green dots overlap those constituencies that are below the 35 percent average.

What we've also done: we've tried to look at ways to bring up some numbers, because there are some different factors between . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we just pause for a second, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: Certainly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is an example of what came out of one of our very first hearings. The question was put to us: have you

considered going to a total population base, not just an elector base? Tom was the first member of our committee to suggest: "You know, I think we'll find that rural families are slightly larger than urban families. There may in fact be a benefit here, if we switched over to a total population rather than just an elector base." So now Tom will lead us through the slides showing what that would mean.

MR. SIGURDSON: And for the first time in my life I was right.

The suggestion was that there are a number of people MLAs represent that aren't involved in the political process: immigrants; religious groups; Indian bands, as we have in Cardston; and people who are under the age of 18. We spend a lot of our provincial budget on education. That's primarily the people that are under the age of 18, but they're not part of the electoral base. If we add all of those names to the list, we get a population of 2,365,000. It then brings up the average to 28,000. Then with the plus or minus 25 percent the top end would be 35,630 people per constituency, or at the low end, 21,378.

If we go to the next slide, then, you can see that we moved a few constituencies out of the high end and a few constituencies out of the low end. For example, Cardston was at the very bottom on the previous slide. They were the lowest constituency. They're now almost in the middle of the pack of those constituencies that fall below the average, but they've moved up quite a bit. We refer back to the provincial map, and you can see that we now have two rural constituencies, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray, that are over population. We didn't have any rural constituencies before. Calgary changes slightly. It's gone from over 25 percent. There were 19 . . . I can't make out these numbers, Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: There were 19 constituencies on the enumeration lists that were over 25 with the population. There's 18 that were over: one less.

MR. SIGURDSON: Eighteen over now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So one less.

MR. SIGURDSON: One less. And under, we went from 24 constituencies to 22.

Again, Edmonton. A number of constituencies have changed their status.

Here's where you start to see some significant change. This colour indicates those constituencies that fall below the 35 percent guideline. That's gone from 16 if we only use the electoral lists - we've now gone down to 12. But here's where you'll see a significant difference. Using only the electors, we had five constituencies that were below 50 percent. Using population base as the criterion, we're down to one constituency that falls below 50 percent less than average.

This excludes last night's hearing, but prior to last night we had had a number of meetings, with 52 written submissions. I think last night we had an additional 18 submissions, so we're now at 70, and I know that today we've got a good number. If there are no questions, we'd best get to those submissions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Question for clarification?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm just wondering. If you based it on the total population, what would happen in a court

challenge?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let us come to that. I think that will come out of the discussion when we get into the briefs.

Yes?

MR. HORNER: I might just say, Mr. Chairman, that there's a Ford Bronco - licence plate, SAM - with lights on out front here.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Guess whose? Where's my driver?

MR. SIGURDSON: The lights will go off eventually.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Could we have the lights again, please, Robin?

MR. STORCH: I want to ask one question just quickly before we go ahead.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; go ahead.

MR. STORCH: Tom, I would ask you. The work you've done so far and the slides you showed us were directly in relation to population as it was distributed through the various constituencies. Have you done anything at all in terms of geographical area, size of constituencies, as it relates to population?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's coming.

Please understand that our committee deliberately decided that we should not sit down and try to formulate ideas until we have heard from everyone. It would hardly be fair to those of you who have come out today to give us a brief if we had spent six or eight hours prior to this talking about solutions. We've asked to have all kinds of configurations drawn for us, and we've got a computer expert who's preparing that information. With his help and with Pat Ledgerwood's in his vast experience as Chief Electoral Officer, we should be able to pull out statistics like that.

MR. STORCH: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, then. Without any further ado we'll proceed right on to our briefs, and the process that we will follow: we'll begin with Steve and work our way down the line. Steve will give us his brief. I'll then turn to other committee members - pretty sparse today - and see if there are any questions or comments. If there's someone in the audience who'd like to supplement very briefly what has been said, you'll have the right to do that. Then we'll go on to Norm and so on down the line. All right?

Steve, we'll start with you.

MR. VERT: Mr. Chairman, committee members, ladies and gentlemen: my name is Steven Vert, and I'm the board member from Consort hospital. On behalf of Consort municipal hospital board No. 22 we'd like to thank the chairman and his committee for the opportunity to discuss the review process of electoral boundaries.

The Chinook constituency, except for the extreme northern part of the province, is one of the largest constituencies in the

province, roughly 80 miles by 80 miles. This makes the MLA's job difficult due to the amount of travel time required. At the present time the MLA must deal with six hospital boards, six school boards, nine village and town councils, 14 recreation boards, and four municipalities. Therefore, we believe factors other than population must be taken into consideration when establishing constituency boundaries, such as total areas and distances which must be traveled.

I'd like to thank you for your consideration on this matter on behalf of the Consort hospital board. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Steven.

Any questions or comments? Pat or Tom? Anyone else?

I might just add that it's been noted at some of the other hearings where someone will point out, say, Peace River or the Fort McMurray constituency in terms of size, and one of the bits of statistics we're working on is: let's look at the total settled area of a constituency. In that sense Chinook is unique. The entire constituency is settled. There are people living throughout the riding. We want to take that into account as well. Okay. Thanks very much.

Norman.

MR. STORCH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Committee members, my name is Norman Storch. I'm a farmer from north of Hanna. I can appreciate as I talk to my urban neighbours the fact that they may have some concerns about their representation imbalance with rural areas. I think many important issues do face our urban neighbours. At the same time, I think many rural people face issues as well that are just as important as those urban issues. But most of the rural issues don't arise from population increase; they arise from population decrease. If there's a logical, reasoned argument to be made for representation by population, there is also the counter logical argument to be made for representation virtually by depopulation. Issues become every bit as valid and perhaps more so. It's impossible, in my opinion, to use a mathematical formulation to determine how you address people issues. The weighting practice that has been used in the past I think identifies that.

Balance really is the thing that has made Alberta a strong province to this point. We have a balance between rural and urban. We have a balance between the ag industry and the oil industry. We've got a balance between tradition and risk taking in this province. It's that balance that I think we need to maintain. I think this process you're going through today must really find ways to strive to maintain that balance. The important balance, realistically, is the balance of voting power as it exists in the population.

Those are my comments. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Norman.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thanks, Norman, for the presentation.

You talk of balance, and you talk of rural depopulation. I guess on the other hand is that when you've got rural depopulation, you've got urban increase. We see that. We're all concerned about the change that's going on. Currently we're at about approximately 60-40 urban/rural split with a 50-50 split in terms of representation at the legislative process. If trends continue and there's increased depopulation in rural Alberta, can you pick an arbitrary figure that says we've got to start making changes?

MR. STORCH: In terms of the balance of the voting?

MR. SIGURDSON: In terms of the balance of the representation at the Legislature.

MR. STORCH: No. I do not believe there is a point. I believe the rural population and the rural productivity is important enough to the province of Alberta that it should always be maintained in a relative balance very close to urban/rural population, very close to urban/rural seats in the Legislature. There is not a reasoned argument for doing that in terms of representation by population, and I agree with that. Rep by pop is something that was established a long time ago and has worked very successfully to this point. Times have changed. Populations have changed. We are now more urban and more urbane, and I think we have to take that into account as we strive to determine that balance.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

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

MR. HART: It's my pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to you learned gentlemen and present our views. I'm a local shortgrass squatter. I used to call myself a rancher, but since some of the recent court cases in this province I'm not so sure anymore of what my tenure position is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We won the last one, remember.

MR. HART: Yeah, but we've still got to pass the Supreme Court. But we are hopeful . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We may have to change the law then.

MR. HART: . . . that some of us people with large leases might still be in business in the near future.

But the agriculture segment of this area is largely lease - largely lease - and it creates a lot of problems. There are lots of activists that are looking jealously at our positions, at our way of life, and they want a piece of it. Now, how are we going to fight this? Obviously, there's got to be some change. The old system is not going to work and protect us people, not at all. You know, we have to be protected on the basis of geographic distribution. Locally we're talking about a Triple E deal too. We want fair representation in government. Alberta doesn't have it at the federal level; this constituency isn't going to have it at the provincial level in the very near future if the cities have their way.

Now, how are we going to do this? We don't know. Of course, that's your job, and we think you can get the job done. We know you'll get the job done. The showing here is just fantastic; it's unbelievable. I've seen some that were only two, and that's why I'm here. I've been to meetings where it's been a bad deal for public input, but the showing is phenomenal.

I'll be very short. The commerce here is big business because pretty near every service I use in this area in my ranching operation - and I see all the oil companies and the gas companies around me: all their services come from outside. Practically none of the people we're using in our business lives in this community. They live in Red Deer, Calgary, Brooks, or Stettler. They all come in here and service us, whether it's

hauling grain or manufactured feed or roughage, whatever; they live out there, and they drive in here and do their work. Some of them even bring their lunches, so they don't contribute very much. On that basis our transportation is so outstanding in this province that it can be done. On the one hand it's a real plus, but for political representation it's going to be disastrous.

The average size of the farm in Alberta is about 800 acres. The average size of the operation here is 3,000 acres. We're pretty efficient operators, we think, and also our incomes are one of the highest in the province. We're certainly not a liability to the provincial economy in any way at all. We produce a lot of cattle and a lot of grain; we have for a hundred years. All that stuff is being trucked out and being processed elsewhere, and that's the way it's set up.

Now, maybe some area that has good agricultural representation and should be studied more closely would be Japan. We know that the agricultural influence on politics in that country is very paramount. The farmers have a lot more say in what happens to their industry in every category, far in excess of their numbers. They do have the recognition of the importance of their industry to their national economy. That's where we stand in this constituency: we make a tremendous contribution to the economy of this province, but we're not getting recognition for it.

Thank you.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: You'll be happy to know we didn't bring our lunch; we ate at the Canada Grey.

MR. HART: Thank you for your contribution.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And by the way, I'll be filling with gas before I leave today too.

MR. HART: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else like to add to William's comments?

I think that's a very valid point and something we have to be cognizant of in terms of what's happening. I went into the local bank in Milk River the other day and was speaking to the bank manager. I discovered that we're going to lose one position because all of the statements are now being mailed out of Calgary. So our bank statements are sent by our local bank into the Calgary regional office and centrally mailed out. Not only does that have an impact on our bank, it has an impact on our post office, which now will lose the revenue from postage. I've got a query in to the postmistress to see what that equates to in terms of lost revenue. Those are the kinds of things that William is really on to in terms of some of the things that we're facing in rural Alberta: valid points.

Okay. Brian, let's move on.

MR. HEIDECKER: I have copies of my notes here.

Thank you, Chairman Bob. My name is Brian Heidecker. I'm a farmer from Coronation. I would like to preface my remarks by indicating that I would like to forward the position that the current split between rural and urban constituencies is an appropriate one and is justifiable from a number of different points of view.

Your statistics that you put on the screen there with respect to population, as to whether we break up our constituencies on the basis of population or voters, alarm me even more because I noted that while Chinook was fifth from the bottom of the list in terms of voters, we were second from the bottom of the list in terms of total population, which immediately translates into less kids and less young people in this area. I think that just goes to further underscore the concerns that we have from this particular part of the province in terms of proper representation.

Now, I think the first point I would like to make is with respect to the very strong position that the province of Alberta – and I stress the province of Alberta, because it's my understanding that all parties were strenuously in favour of Senate reform and some type of reasonable reform of our federal Senate so that the smaller provinces, the provinces with less population, cannot be dictated to by the more populous central provinces of Canada. I would suggest to you that what's good for the goose is good for the gander. In other words, the same logic has to apply within our own boundaries. It would do us no good to get a reformed Senate on a national basis only to have the outlying areas of this province discriminated by the more populous central areas. I just think that is an absolute given, and I'm sure I do not have to remind you that the maturity of any society in large part is measured by the manner in which it treats and respects its minority groups. So I think you have to put a lot of emphasis on that.

I would like now to focus on a number of points with respect to the rural areas and the tasks that rural MLAs find themselves faced with. Now, I do not for a minute want to downgrade or minimize the activity of the urban MLAs; I know for a fact that they are busy. But I would like to point out some of the unique characteristics of a rural MLA's job.

The rural areas are low in population; we concede that. But a large proportion of the province's revenues derive from the resource industries located in these areas. The three major industries in this province in terms of economic activity at the present time are the oil and gas industry, which is totally located in the rural areas; the agriculture industry, which is similarly located there; and to a large extent our expanding tourism industry. Now, these activities are all in the rural areas. This results in conflicting land use objectives, more recently in environmental considerations, and most certainly in terms of regulatory matters, all of which come back to the rural MLAs in the form of requests, getting information as to what's possible and what is not, suggestions for changes to laws and regulations, problems with boards, commissions, et cetera. I simply put it to you that it is a phenomenal consumer of a rural MLA's time, that an urban MLA would not have the same requirement of their time.

As Steve pointed out in his brief, a rural MLA has to deal with many more jurisdictions in the form of counties or municipalities, school boards, hospital boards, and recreation boards, which all derive significant grants from the province and, as such, find it necessary to be in contact with their MLA on a more or less regular basis. There always seems to be a hitch with these things, and if you ever spend a Saturday morning in the MLA's office, you can be assured there will be some people in there dealing with that.

But I think another facet that we have to look at is the phenomenal number of organizations in the rural areas that have contact with the MLAs: the service clubs, the sports clubs, the 4-H, and youth groups are either requiring some time in their own right or they are providing some service to our rural

communities that is interlinked to the government via grants or operating procedures, whatever. Many of them seem to find it necessary to be in the MLA's office.

The sixth point on my brief there is one that might boil down to some of Brian's laws of uneconomics, but sometimes when you go to the ridiculous, it makes a point. Our former MLA and, I might add, our current MLA regularly clock up approximately 70,000 miles per year on their vehicles. That's in large part because we in this area have no access to air travel, short of charters, of course. Now, if you work that out on an average of 50 miles per hour, that converts into 1,400 hours per year or 27 hours per week just in travel time, and I would suggest that there are some folks in the city who think that 10 hours more than that constitutes a full workweek. So it might put it in perspective as to what these MLAs are up against. Certainly that would not apply to all rural MLAs because in fact there are some commuter air services into some portions of the province, but I would point out that there is no scheduled air service into Chinook.

The last point I would like to make is with respect to some things that happened in the previous redistributions. They did not take into consideration some small factors that could have made the rural MLAs' task somewhat easier. By not following existing county, school, or hospital boundaries – and I must stress, where it would be possible – many small corners were shifted into another constituency, giving an MLA several more jurisdictions to cope with or, alternatively, just simply not being able to get there. The case in point: there is a small area north of Coronation that was shifted into the constituency of Wainwright in the Brownfield area, approximately 200 square miles. That gave the MLA for Wainwright another school jurisdiction, another county, another school board, and another recreation board. The population factor would have been perhaps 200, but it was much easier to travel along the 12th baseline than it was to follow the somewhat irregular nature of the Battle River. However, that did add considerably to the rural MLA's job. And I think you'll find throughout your hearings that there are many instances where this happened. I would make the suggestion to you that you could make life easier for the rural MLAs by going on coterminous boundaries when possible.

That concludes my brief.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Brian. Just before seeing if there are any questions, I'm pleased to introduce Pam Barrett. Pam is the House leader for the New Democratic Party in the Assembly. She is the Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: And I didn't speed on my way here. Who wrote "two hours from Red Deer?" They didn't have 100 kilometres an hour in mind.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've already discussed that issue.

MS BARRETT: Oh, you did. I'm so sorry; I really apologize.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; that's fine.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just a couple of points. The point you made last, if I can deal with that first. One of the opportunities we have as a committee is to make recommendations to a commission. Previous commissions have always redrawn boundaries, submitted a report, gone out and had public

hearings, and have made some minor adjustments to the boundaries they've already created. I think that at this point, having traveled to a number of meetings, having talked with Bob and other members of the committee, the probability of the commission traveling around Alberta prior to there being any erasing and redrawing of boundaries is quite great. There will be input prior to a commission drawing boundaries, so I think that's an important factor, and it'll be an opportunity for those submissions to come forward.

I want to deal with the first point; that's the position on Senate reform where you talk about there being equal representation. We don't have a bicameral House in Alberta; we've got one Legislative Assembly. Would you think that when and where possible, cabinet positions should be reserved for rural representation? It may make 50-50 representation there so that you've got a balance in cabinet.

MR. HEIDECKER: Oh, I'd be awfully fearful of that one, sir. It seems to me that the cabinet positions should go to the most capable individuals within the party that has the most seats in the House. In that instance, I'm certainly prepared to take my chances because I'm sure we'll have the best ones coming from the rural area, and we'll get our fair share of the cabinet posts. But I think it would really cause some unrest and concern in the urban areas to do it that way. It seems to me that by some modification of the formulas here, recognizing the tremendous amount of economic activity coming out of the rural areas and the nature of the job, it's best to deal with it through the numbers of MLAs. To go to the cabinet level I think would cause you as many problems in the city as you would solve in the rural areas.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions? Other comments? Thanks, Brian.

Harry.

MR. GORDON: Good afternoon, Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Harry Gordon, and I come from the Rose Lynn area, which is south of Sheerness. It's where the big parkland is there, another five miles east of that. Those people who run up and down Highway 36 will know where that is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We do.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Bob, we can't hear back here. Can you turn the mike around?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Harry, can you turn to the side, please?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Or turn the mike around. It's terrible sound.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the mike, unfortunately, is not part of the sound system. Harry, if you could just turn your chair so you're facing to the west, then hopefully people can hear better. A little bit more so you're projecting out.

MR. GORDON: I'll turn up the volume.

There's no need for me to enlarge on the review process or on the considerations upon which the committee is operating. My remarks will touch on most of the seven points under which you

are operating today but more specifically on number six, which is:

- (f) The impact of the determination of the constituency boundaries on the ability of Members of the Legislative Assembly to fully discharge their duties in their constituencies.

In other words, availability and accessibility both ways.

Chinook constituency is roughly 100 miles square: 17 ranges east and west and 16 townships north and south, from township 21 to township 37. Compare that to Calgary-Foothills, which is somewhere in the neighbourhood of one-twentieth the size of Chinook. It seems to me the time should be past when constituencies can be carved up like a jigsaw puzzle. The reason I use Calgary-Foothills is that I have a daughter who lives in Calgary-Foothills – in fact, she lived on the same street where Janet Koper lived – so I'm somewhat familiar with the size of Calgary-Foothills.

In this area we have lost Hand Hills, Sedgewick-Coronation, and Hanna-Oyen constituencies. In my opinion, now is the time when alternatives to representation by population in sparsely populated areas should be addressed. One alternative would be to use the assessment base, equalized if necessary. Starland makes this point very effectively in its brief. I don't know if you're going to be hearing from Starland. Do you know, Bob?

MR. PRITCHARD: I don't think I have somebody from Starland.

MR. GORDON: Well, I'll quote out of Starland's.

MRS. McCLELLAN: They have a written submission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They do? They have a written submission. Yes, thank you. We are.

MR. GORDON: Okay. Then I won't touch on it, but they make a good case for using the assessment base either/or with the population base.

Other countries equalize urban and rural representation in different ways. In the U.S.A. they have their senatorial system. In France rural representation numbers are fixed by statute. In Canada we have a royal commission on electoral reform and party financing canvassing the area this spring, starting in April, asking for input on how Canadians vote. The commission will look at every facet of the federal election process including riding redistribution, voter and candidate eligibility, voter registration, voting hours, a permanent voters' list, and enforcement of the Canada Elections Act. Why I'm pointing this out is because the changes that are taking place all over the world are being recognized here too, and we have to make some changes. Hopefully something more permanent both federally and provincially will emerge from these hearings.

It seems to me that every time surgery is performed on rural constituencies, they bleed. When I look at that map and see where you come from, Taber-Warner, I say in here you may have the dubious honour, Mr. Chairman, of being the head surgeon of the team operating on Taber-Warner and of being your own undertaker and writing your own eulogy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You've certainly got my attention.

MR. GORDON: A book could be written about section (f) and the problems of a rural MLA servicing his or her constituency as compared to that of an urban MLA. Again using Calgary-

Foothills and Chinook as examples, Shirley McClellan drives 110,000 to 130,000 kilometres a year, and Pat Black isn't here, so I won't guess at her mileage. But I suppose most of you know that Charlie Edwards used to say that the farmers and ranchers were so scattered here that we have to keep our own tomcats. So that gives you an idea of how far apart we are situated. In most cases an urban MLA can take a plane, attend an evening meeting in his or her constituency, and be back in Edmonton the next morning for business as usual. Not so for most rural MLAs.

A prime consideration is the number of jurisdictions a rural MLA has to deal with compared to that of an urban MLA, and some of the other presenters have talked about that. But Chinook encompasses special areas 2, 3, and 4, the MD of Starland, part of Paintearth, Acadia, all the villages and towns they're in, schools and school districts, churches, hospitals, health units, seniors' lodges, community centres, service clubs, 4-H clubs, CARRA, Hutterite colonies, and environmental issues such as feedlots, garbage disposal, airfields, oil and gas plants, refineries, crop insurance, and associated water problems or lack thereof. An example is the Henry Kroeger water line from Hanna to Oyen, and we have another one ongoing that is taking a lot of the attention of our MLA.

All of the above point out the need for a balance of community interests and a wide minus tolerance in electoral districts that are already large in size and have a sparse population and limited accessibility; that's timewise. Time constraints very often limit the Chinook MLA to weekend service to her constituents, particularly when the Legislature is in session or if the MLA is a cabinet minister. Both Kroeger and McClellan have devoted much time to the development of water projects in Chinook. That in itself is enough to keep an MLA very busy. I'm repeating about water there, and I don't apologize for that.

It is not my intention to debate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Meech Lake, Senate reform, or indeed representation by population. The age-old principle of representation by population isn't working here. It hasn't worked in the west, the maritimes, or the far north. The present system in Canada has resulted in political control in Ontario and Quebec and if continued in Alberta without variables will result in government by city representatives who, in my opinion, may have a poorer understanding of rural problems than rural elected officials. Here again you can use the tomcat example, if you like.

A word on the B.C. decision. It is arbitrary, an easy way out, and may be only a short-term solution. I was extremely disappointed in what that judgment was and how it came up, because there's nothing new there. You know: "Elementary, my dear Watson" is all they did. Why a 25 percent factor? Why not 24 or 26 or 55 or some other arbitrary figure?

Then there's the issue of eligible voters versus total voters, and the board discussed that. The cost of all these commissions and committees is staggering. Ah me, what price freedom? No doubt one could assume that the present ratio of 42 urban and 41 rural seats was an arbitrary decision. Possibly it could be argued that as cities become larger, they need more seats to be better represented and to get better service. The same could be said for rural constituencies. As they become larger, the service becomes very difficult to provide to the voters to contact their MLA.

We need a new formula embodying those principles that I have been talking about. We need a new formula badly, and we need it now. Whatever recommendations this committee comes up with, I hope that we would have an opportunity to endorse

or suggest amendments that might be unique to this area, and I'm hoping that you can do that before you go back to the boundaries commission. I know there are some time frames in there.

At times like this, one's faith in the democratic process becomes strained. I know mine has, anyway. Mark Twain's definition of faith: "Faith is believing what you know ain't so." Some of you may remember what Will Rogers said one time. He said that it ain't what we don't know that hurts us; it's what we know ain't so. And Yogi Berra said that it ain't over till it's over. I certainly hope your committee finds a solution. Good luck, Mr. Chairman. I wish you well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Harry. Just before I ask for questions from the committee, Harry, towards the end of the brief you asked if there'd be an opportunity for this area to have input before we submit our report. We're under a time frame, a time line problem, in that we must report to the Assembly during the next sitting. Now, we've made a commitment that we're going to complete the hearings between now and the beginning of the sitting, and the sitting now has been scheduled for March 8. We have a few repeat visits to make. I just don't believe we'll be able to do that. What we are committed to do, though, is to ensure that when our report is written – and hopefully, God willing, it'll be an unanimous report, although it may not – each caucus will have a chance to address it and work on it. Your member along with other members from rural areas will be able to look at it thoroughly before anything is done from there. One of the reasons we've taken down the names and addresses of everyone who's come out today is so we can ensure that you receive a copy of our report. That's as close as we can come to getting the actual document to you rather than the cut-down version that you'd read in a newspaper.

Tom, I think you had your hand up for a question. I'm sorry; before we do, I've got to introduce one more member of our committee. We are growing as time goes on this afternoon. Frank Bruseker, Liberal Member for Calgary-North West, has joined us. Welcome, Frank.

MR. SIGURDSON: In your last paragraph on the third page you talk about the possibility of it being an arbitrary decision, but you also argue that "as cities become larger, they [may] need more seats." If you wanted to keep rural constituencies given the geographical constraints that there are in rural Alberta, in rural constituencies, would it be a preference to increase the number of urban seats?

MR. GORDON: No. I thought that would catch somebody and they would ask a question on that, because really what I'm hinting at is that as you get more people and the cities are justified in greater representation, the reverse logic is true for rural constituencies. They get so darn large and so big that we have to have urban MLAs in reverse. That's why I'm suggesting some other means, and that's why rep by pop is not working.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Pat?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Just wondering, Harry. You remember that when we had 79 seats, we had 42 rural and 37 urban, so it was weighted to the rural. The last commission changed it to 42 and 41. Did you feel that it was weighted incorrectly, or was there justification when it was weighted in favour of the rural, despite the fact that they had a lower population base?

MR. GORDON: Well, I have no really strong feelings that it has to be equal for urban and rural. You know, a few seats one way or the other really doesn't bother me very much. But the fact is, if we go on on the basis that we've gone, you know, the rural seats will disappear. Somebody did some arithmetic – I don't know if it was your committee or not – that if we go the way we're going now, we could lose 13 rural constituencies. I didn't figure that out; somebody did. Maybe you did; I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the figure that's generally been used is that if you apply the rigid plus/minus 25 percent rule and added no seats, you could see a transfer of 10 rural seats. Ten rural seats would disappear and 10 new urban seats would be created.

Any other questions of Harry? Anyone else like to make a comment? Go ahead, Brian.

MR. HEIDECKER: Let's just be clear on those numbers. We're at 42 urban, 41, right now. You're saying that if we applied the letter of the law, we would pick 10 rural ones?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We would lose approximately 10 of the rural seats, and if you did not increase the number of the seats in the Assembly, and very few people have recommended that, you then have a transfer of 10 seats to the urban areas.

MR. HEIDECKER: Okay. So that would give us 52 urban seats and 31 rural seats. I would make the comment that that would be much, much too large of a change to make. I mean, a few seats, okay. But of that magnitude I think there would be no justification whatsoever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, to be clear, I haven't heard anyone on the committee recommend that. We're merely pointing out the numbers, if you were following the numbers as presented on the slide.

Okay, thank you very much, presenters.

Bob, you've got an innovative list for the next set so that we can try to accommodate those who have traveled some distance?

MR. PRITCHARD: Right. The next set will be Elizabeth Roberts, Phil Hansen, Ross Rawlusk, Jack Butler, Ron Leonhardt, and Bud Pals.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It would be our intention to have a short coffee break after we've heard from these presenters, and while we're doing that, we will caucus and try to come up with a date for you.

Elizabeth, I'm going to ask you to go first.

Again, if anyone has difficulty hearing at the back, please just signal and we'll try to correct that.

All right; you have your copies, Elizabeth? Okay, we'll proceed, Elizabeth, please.

MRS. ROBERTS: Thank you. Thank you for accommodating me. My little girl is getting a little restless.

I would like to entitle my presentation "conflicting rights," because I feel that's exactly what the problem is. Our democratic rights say:

Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly. That's number 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights.

Number 15 of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms



deals with our equality rights. The first part says:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination.

That's just a part of it. It goes on.

The second part:

Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups.

That's the section I want to deal with.

These rights can be shown to be conflicting when examining the basis of representation by Members of the Legislative Assembly. Clearly, every electoral division has a different number of voters within it yet is only represented by one MLA. That means that every voter has a different weight in determining who becomes an MLA, an infraction of our equality of rights under subsection (1). Under subsection (2), however, the infraction created by having differing numbers of voters in electoral divisions disappears when one considers that the purpose of this subsection of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is to improve the conditions of disadvantaged groups.

Rural Albertans are disadvantaged in a number of ways. There are fewer libraries, fewer indoor swimming pools, fewer paved roads, fewer or no specialized health care facilities, no zoos, no universities, and less specialized schools. The list can be extensive. I can add things like public transportation. I need a vehicle to get to town to buy my groceries. If I were living in an urban setting, that would not be true, and it is a very costly venture for anybody to own a vehicle.

In addition, physically large rural electoral divisions make it extremely difficult for Members of the Legislative Assembly to fully discharge their duties in their constituencies. Travel time – that's been dealt with already – accessibility, and firsthand knowledge become major considerations.

I can understand the desire to change the electoral boundaries when considering democratic rights and subsection (1) of the equality rights. However, in all fairness subsection (2) of equality rights must take precedence in these considerations. Therefore, I believe retaining the status quo of provincial electoral boundaries is the best solution.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Elizabeth. Questions or comments from the panel? Anyone else? It's interesting how you've looked at the Charter of Rights in terms of the disadvantaged clause and applied it to some of the things that rural people go without. Okay. Thanks very much. You can go ahead back to your youngster, if you like.

Phil, we'll go back to you, then, and work our way down the line.

MR. HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you speak up, please, Phil?

MR. HANSEN: Sorry.

The municipal district of Provost would like to present their concerns for your consideration. We are a large, sparsely populated municipality which, together with one other municipal district, parts of two counties, plus 10 towns and villages, make up the Wainwright constituency. Our MD has a population of 2,725, or about two people per square mile, while the whole

constituency has two voters per square mile. The town of Provost is located 288 kilometres from Edmonton and presently 100 kilometres from the MLA's office.

Our MLA Butch Fischer's workload includes the needs and concerns of 14 councils – 10 urban and four rural – four hospital boards, four main school boards and several smaller ones, several recreation boards, two health units, two colleges, social services for the area, as well as the agricultural societies and other organizations that lobby for his support. He tries to maintain contact with constituents by attending most social functions.

You can see why we are opposed to any expansion of our borders. We have a difficult time now in getting our share of the pie and an even harder time scheduling an annual visit from our MLA. We don't have the option of a blended urban/rural constituency, as has been previously suggested, since there are no large urban centres to be included. To meet the 25 percent requirement, you can appreciate the MLA's workload or rural stress factor which would be required if you look at all our purple neighbours.

The provincial economy continues to rely on gas and oil revenues, and our municipality has been one of the most active areas in the province over the last three years, while agriculture, the number one industry, has been under severe pressure due to a continued drought. Strong rural representation is required to protect these industries.

The government of Alberta has taken a position which the citizens of this province agree with: that lesser populated areas require disproportionate representation in order to ensure that their interests are protected. It would be inconsistent to suggest that Alberta deserves equal representation in Ottawa if we do not also accept that eastern Alberta deserves equal representation in Edmonton. We are advocating disproportionate representation in Ottawa, and this should also be applied to the provincial electoral boundaries. The MD of Provost supports the current legislation or distribution rule of 42 urban divisions and 41 rural divisions based on the fact that remote, sparsely populated, large geographical areas are already disadvantaged by their numbers and size.

We would have more people and organizations out to support this position if we could have reasonable access to a meeting. When they have to travel over 160 kilometres to a meeting, they are already disadvantaged. We would like your committee to come to the Wainwright constituency to enable other councils of the towns and villages and school boards and hospital boards to participate.

In conclusion, we in the MD of Provost defend disproportionate representation on the right to reasonable access to our Member of the Legislative Assembly. The distances and workload of the MLA are special circumstances which should be addressed. When setting the ground rules for any redistribution, we hope you will take these special circumstances into account and consider the regional aspect rather than a specific population percentage.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Phil. Questions? Yes, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Did you not know that this committee is going to Viking?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, ma'am. I certainly did.

MS BARRETT: That's not close enough?

MR. HANSEN: The distances are very similar.

MS BARRETT: Really? From where you came today, about 160 kilometres?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, ma'am.

MS BARRETT: Okay. It is impossible, as you can imagine, for us to go to all 83 ridings.

MR. HANSEN: I realize that, yes. But I think if you look on the map, you'll see there's quite a large area in there that there is no . . .

MS BARRETT: I should explain - I realize we're supposed to be using this time to ask questions. You saw the purple map with the green dots in the slide show. We made a conscious decision to go to the areas that were most likely to be affected by any implications of the Charter decision out of B.C., so you will see that the green dots do reflect that. Anyway, I'm just explaining that we're doing the best we can, honest.

MR. HANSEN: I understand that and I appreciate it.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks. Any other questions of Phil?

MR. SIGURDSON: I've got one. Again going back to the options, perhaps, that we have as a committee to make recommendations to the Legislature, they'll just include the electoral process. Do you think it would be reasonable to have funds for a second constituency office in constituencies that are large and vast so that constituents wouldn't have to travel the 160 kilometres to get to a constituency office?

MR. HANSEN: Well, I think it would certainly help in our case; that's for sure. See, Provost, our large centre in our MD, is on the very east end of our municipality.

MR. SIGURDSON: So a second office in the constituency would change the hours of operation, you know, of an MLA.

MR. HANSEN: I think it would certainly help.

MR. SIGURDSON: It would facilitate a constituent's access to an MLA office, if they knew when the MLA was going to be attending it.

MR. LEONHARDT: What are the constituency funds based on? Population?

MR. SIGURDSON: No. There's a formula that's . . . You're on Members' Services; you'd best explain it. I'm not on Members' Services. Some of it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a flat amount for the actual constituency office. When looking at the postage rate and what's called a promotional allowance for pins and things, it's on a population rate.

Any other questions or comments of Phil? Anyone else?

Thanks very much.

Ron.

MR. LEONHARDT: Mr. Chairman, members of the select committee, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Unifarm, Alberta's general farm organization, and specifically Unifarm region 11, we appreciate the opportunity to express our views to this select committee.

We've studied the information provided by the select committee, and we're also aware of the British Columbia Supreme Court ruling. If the population factor of plus or minus 25 percent were applied in Alberta, 43 constituencies would not come within the guidelines and adjustments would be required. Twenty-four of the present 41 rural constituencies would have to be enlarged or eliminated if such a guideline was considered. For example, the Chinook constituency where we are today would require more than a 50 percent increase in size to come up to the provincial average. There are four other constituencies with populations lower than Chinook. They would require even greater adjustment to meet the guidelines. Considering the present size of such constituencies, it is completely impractical to enlarge these areas to that extent.

The rural MLA in a constituency such as Chinook must deal with many jurisdictions - and they've been mentioned: the towns, villages, counties, municipalities, school boards, health units, planning commissions - with many diverse problems. A rural MLA must be familiar with the agricultural industry, with the oil industry, the tourist industry, and even such essential rural services as adequate water supply for towns, villages, and farms. The rural MLA must also, with the people, struggle to maintain an educational system, a health care system, an ambulance system, and care for the elderly in an area of declining population. The rural MLA must have a knowledge of an area covering thousands of square kilometres, be familiar with hundreds of miles of road, and be prepared to travel 100,000 kilometres a year by private transportation to carry out his or her duties.

The people of Alberta should have the right to an accessible MLA. One of the points this select committee will consider is the ability of the MLAs to fully discharge their duty to their constituents, and I believe in this area that's the most important thing we can see. Any increase in the size of rural constituencies will make it physically impossible for the MLA to do this.

At the annual Unifarm convention in Edmonton in January of 1990, the Hon. Ray Speaker expressed the government's concern for declining population and the lack of opportunities in many of the rural areas. He outlined some initiatives that would have to be undertaken to address this problem. It will require a co-ordinated effort by provincial and local government if this is to be successful. We strongly support this concept. Any move to enlarge rural constituencies and decrease rural representation would be counterproductive to this process.

In conclusion, we believe it's neither desirable nor practical to base the size of constituencies on a population formula alone. The workload that is imposed on an MLA who must deal with many jurisdictions spread over a wide area and the diversity of problems that must be dealt with must be given the greater consideration. We therefore recommend that the present rural/urban distribution be maintained.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Ron. Questions or comments? Supplement? Thank you.

Okay, Ross.

MR. RAWLUSYK: Thanks, Bob. Mr. Chairman, members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, ladies and gentlemen, the council of the municipal district of Starland has reviewed the impact that the pending electoral boundary redistribution . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, Ron. Could you speak a little louder?

MR. RAWLUSYK: Sure. . . . would have on our jurisdiction and on the balance of urban and rural representation in the province of Alberta. We are aware that legislation in Alberta requires a review of electoral boundaries after every second provincial election. The Electoral Boundaries Commission is established to review and possibly amend Alberta's electoral boundaries. Our municipality is also aware of the province of British Columbia's Supreme Court ruling wherein the issue of electoral representation was examined in light of the Canadian Constitution, 1981. The guideline of the average plus or minus 25 percent was considered by the courts as a reasonable measure of equitable representation. Forty-three of Alberta's 83 electoral divisions would not fall within these parameters and revisions would be required.

The municipal district of Starland is currently split between the constituencies of Drumheller and Chinook. The Drumheller constituency currently has a population of 15,236 electors, a figure that falls within the 25 percent of average but is still 3,449 voters less than the average. On the other hand, the Chinook constituency has just 9,197 electors and would require boundary adjustments that would add at least 4,817 voters to the constituency. Given the current size of the Chinook constituency, our council feels it is impractical to further enlarge an area that has to be covered by an MLA. In Calgary, for example, the 18 MLAs collectively enjoy the luxury of having to meet only one council, two school boards, one health unit, and one regional planning commission. The Calgary MLA can readily travel through his or her constituency in minutes, call and be called by constituents toll free, and he or she has 17 municipal colleagues that comprise 21 percent of elected representation in Alberta.

You've already had, I guess, several presentations in terms of Shirley McClellan's responsibilities here in Chinook. The rural MLA also covers hundreds of square kilometres of constituency and does not enjoy the air travel access to Edmonton an urban counterpart has. To increase the size of the constituency would only enhance the problems of communication and effective representation. Even the Canadian Constitution addresses issues of equalization and regional disparities, and our council urges the committee to explore alternatives that wouldn't leave rural Alberta without a legislative voice.

One possible alternative may be to jointly consider the assessment base and population base in sparsely populated areas, because though sparsely populated, rural Alberta contains industrial and agricultural infrastructure that warrants effective representation. For example, the equalized assessment for the city of Calgary for 1988 was \$5,662,488,290 which, if divided equally among those 18 city constituencies, averaged \$314,500,000 and change. Despite being somewhat sparsely populated, the taxation base of the Chinook constituency is approximately \$294 million in assessment. The average for Edmonton is just \$270 million. Our council feels that the equalized assessment figures are a reflection of the activity and

viability of an area. We feel it is essential that the economic component of rural Alberta should warrant equal representation despite an inequality of votes.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, citizens have a right to an accessible MLA, and the MLA should have the opportunity to be readily available. We feel it is impractical to base the boundaries of constituencies only on population guidelines, and we hope we have sufficiently illustrated that more sparsely populated constituencies like Chinook possess an economic viability which deserves representation equal to that of a Calgary constituency. Combined with the factors of coverage area and the number of local authorities a rural MLA has to liaise with, we feel the 25 percent population parameter is unreasonable and should be expanded. The municipal district of Starland encourages the committee to maintain a relatively equal rural/urban distribution of electoral divisions and to allow for regional disparities in electoral populations where expanded areas would become too large for fair representation.

Thanks for the opportunity, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ross. Questions or comments from the panel? Pam.

MS BARRETT: I'm intrigued by your concept of a new formula. And I don't mean to be flippant when I ask this question, because I have a deep concern about this. Would you suggest, then, that an area like Peace River, which is absolutely gigantic and might have an assessment base that is relatively low, should be entitled to half an MLA - a shared MLA, for instance? How far would you take this suggestion? Or is it just one of many that your county has toyed with, and is it just a prompt to get us to think of other ways?

MR. RAWLUSYK: I think if you examined it, you'd probably find that the wealth in that area is similar to the wealth in this area. They have a . . .

MS BARRETT: It might be, but I'm just saying "for an example." Because if you want to talk about a physically very big riding, let's say its resources are relatively few. Just pretend, because these things can happen.

MR. RAWLUSYK: Yeah. I think it would just be one of the factors we would see being considered.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. RAWLUSYK: On the federal scene we've seen a problem where there's a concentration of wealth versus a concentration of population. For example, the oil and gas revenues that the province of Alberta lost. We've seen that perhaps the sparsity of population has come out on the bottom end.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Ross.  
Okay; Bud.

MR. PALS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have a printed brief for you. I'm here as the chairman of our hospital board in Castor. I'm here because we don't have a hearing in my own constituency.

I would like to very strongly reinforce some of the things that have been said before without necessarily repeating them. If I were to pick any one speaker who has spoken before me, it

would be Brian Heidecker, who I believe said very effectively the things I feel as well in terms of the relationship between the MLA and the various boards, councils, and levels of government the MLA has to deal with. I think it's also a very important point, and I hope you will underline it, red line it, whatever you would: the concept of coterminous boundaries wherever possible. That, I believe, is a very important part of any formula you might come up with.

Having said that, I think there are only about two or three points I would like to make. One is that if you're setting up criteria for the coterminous boundaries committee to actually draw lines, don't increase the number of MLAs. You guys cost us too much money. We can't afford any more MLAs. So take that as a strong recommendation: you don't take the easy way out and add a few more seats in the cities. Take it as a strong recommendation that we think we've got all the government we can afford now.

Another thing, I believe, is that when you're looking at the B.C. decision, recognize that it may have applied in B.C. and it may have been a court decision, but it isn't cast in stone and it may not necessarily apply here in Alberta. However, in saying that, I would also caution you as a committee to make sure that whatever decisions you come up with will stand up in court. I've noticed some media reports of speakers who have said that if that plus or minus 25 percent doesn't actually show up in the final recommendations, it will wind up in court. So I challenge this committee, given the makeup of the committee, to reach decisions for the final committee that will actually stand up in court. We don't need a long-drawn-out court battle over our boundaries.

Lastly, I would say be creative in setting up whatever guidelines. Certainly the criteria have been set out very effectively before me in terms of the area. Take very strong note of the fact that the average rural MLA spends almost an entire work year, if that's an appropriate term, in his car, doing nothing else but driving from one part of his constituency to the other and, in addition, then has to carry the rest of the workload. So in looking at what kinds of criteria you will set up for the boundaries commission, it would be, then, the size, the number of other jurisdictions that the MLA has to deal with, and the population as well. All those things have to come into a creative formula that will allow rural Alberta to have equal access to their MLAs.

One final point I would make is that I think the government ought to do something to enhance communications in rural Alberta. I make the suggestion that the long-distance charges that are made between centres within a constituency ought to be totally eliminated. I think it would not be unreasonable for all of the phones that are in any one phone directory to be toll free. It appears to me that an Edmonton citizen has access to half a million phones for no charge for his monthly rate. I have access to perhaps, at the very most, 4,000. So I think enhance those communications, make it easier for us to communicate back and forth not only with our MLA but with other levels of government, with other boards, commissions, et cetera, that make up the social structure of a constituency. That might go a long way to assist in helping us to function more effectively.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Bud.

Okay. Questions from panel members? Anyone else?

Just one slight editorial note re the possible legal challenge. While we haven't talked about it in a formal sense, I have not

gotten the feeling from any committee member that we're running for the hills and that we're automatically accepting a very restrictive formula as set out by a court. We want to ensure that whatever we do is as defensible as possible if there is a court challenge.

MR. PALS: I'm behind you all the way on that one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're not rolling over and playing dead and saying we're just automatically accepting something. That's one of the reasons we're out in communities like this; it's to get input.

MR. PALS: Great.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jack.

MR. BUTLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I should apologize that I only have the one copy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's all right.

MR. BUTLER: I didn't make extra copies, but if you wish, when I'm finished I can go and find a machine somewhere in the building and have a bunch made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It will be in *Hansard*, Jack. That's fine.

MR. BUTLER: Okay. That's why I didn't make more. Thank you.

Well, Mr. Chairman and committee members, certainly I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and present some of my views on this very important matter that you have before you. In reading the *Hansards* of your meetings, so far everyone agrees that there should be fair representation at the Legislature. The opinions differ as to what is fair. In my opinion, there are many things to be considered in order to establish fair representation.

First, let us establish the Legislature Building as home base and work out from there. There is the distance the MLA has to travel to and from the constituency. Number two, the availability of transportation such as airlines; three, the size of the constituency; four, the manner in which the population is situated within the constituency. That will determine the amount of time spent traveling within the constituency: the number of boards and councils that he has to deal with. There are constituencies that fall below the recommended formula in terms of voters. It takes a tremendous effort on the part of the MLA to keep in touch where there is no airline transportation available. Many hours of driving are required to travel to and from home base, and many hours of travel within the constituency to service the constituency, especially when population is sparsely spread throughout the area, with no large population centres.

To make these constituencies larger in order to bring the numbers in line with the recommended formula - there would be no way one person could service it. There then would be no fair representation. There are constituencies that are quite small in area and fall above the recommended formula in terms of voters. Where transportation is available, the MLA can leave home base, attend an evening meeting, and return in time for work the next day. In such cases, there can be good representation given to many more people.

Thank you for your time, and I am sure that your good judgment will be used when your final report is made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Jack.  
Yes, Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: I want to ask a question. I'm going to ask it of Jack, and maybe if anybody else wants to respond, that would be fine too. The question I have, Jack, is that many people have been talking about what I perceive as one kind of representation, and that is the access of the MLA to the constituents and the constituents to the MLA. But there's another kind of representation, too, that I think is important that has not been discussed here today yet so far, which is when you or I or any of us stands up in the Legislature and casts our one vote in the Legislature, and that is that at that point in time that has not anything really to do with what your constituents have told you over the years. So the question I'm getting to is this. In my constituency, for example, I represent 31,000 voters, and if you take three constituencies over here, 31,000 voters would get three MLAs and therefore three votes in the Legislature. What do you think about the concept of a weighted vote in the Legislature? So that if you are or Shirley is the MLA for 10,000 voters in Chinook, she would stand up and 10,000 would be written down beside her name, and I would stand up and 31,000 would be written beside my name, and 12,000 beside Mr. Fischer, and so forth.

MR. BUTLER: Well, I'd have to give that a lot of thought, but offhand I would say no, I couldn't agree with it.

MR. BRUSEKER: Could you expand on that at all?

MR. BUTLER: Well, that would give you the voting power in the House, so therefore it would be the same thing as making many more constituencies. The end result would be the same thing: having many more constituencies in the urban areas than the rural.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think, if I can interject, if we had a bicameral House where you had one House that was based solely on population and an upper Chamber based on regional representation – that's the American system – then you can have your rep by pop in the lower House. Because in the upper House you've got, in the case of the United States, two Senators per state, whether it's a state like California with its – what? – 27 million people or Montana with 700,000. But we don't have that. We've got a unicameral House, so we're really combining those two elements into one.

MR. BUTLER: Further to your question. When you stand up and vote for 31,000 people, and you say that your vote may not necessarily be what they think – did I hear that correctly?

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, ideally you did. No. What I'm saying is that when you go up there a lot of times, the decisions, as you are aware, go on party lines. So the 59 Tories stand up together.

MR. BUTLER: Yeah, I'm aware of what takes place in caucus.

MR. BRUSEKER: I know you are.

MR. BUTLER: I also know that in caucus you have your

chance. You have a chance to speak, and many times you can change caucus.

MR. BRUSEKER: You can, yes.

MR. BUTLER: I've turned you around on a couple of occasions. I know it can be done. But then you come out . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: And sometimes you can't.

MR. BUTLER: Yeah, but if you're going to vote on something that is completely against what your voters think, then you'd better be absent from the House that day.

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess the reason I mentioned it, Jack, is that it would allow constituencies to stay the same size, and you would still have the same access to your MLA and the MLA's access to the constituents.

MR. BUTLER: But your MLA wouldn't swing very much weight in the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bud, you wanted to get into this.

MR. PALS: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to comment that the very concept of creating two levels of MLAs is somehow offensive to me. It appears to me as though it would almost destroy any camaraderie or equalness that ought to exist when you're having a team such as a government ought to be. If you can say to Shirley, "Hey, I've got three votes to your one," what is your relationship going to be? So I believe that that concept is not appropriate to elected officials. I believe they all should approach the caucus and the government with an equal right to cast their vote according to the constituents they represent.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well spoken, but you look at it from the rural side. Now, if I can point out from the urban side, I represent 31,000 and Shirley represents 10,000. So she has already a 3 to 1 ratio in that if you cast one ballot here, it has the equal weight of three ballots cast from me in my constituency.

MR. PALS: I recognize the numbers you're trying to make, but what I'm looking at is the concept of a team, which I believe government ought to be, and the destruction of that team by having some that are better than others.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, there always will be vagaries.

The other question I wanted to ask you was this. Thinking back to the election, we've heard everybody talk about travel concerns and so forth, and there's no doubt that that's a valid concern and that those things should be – "factored in" is the term we hear on a number of occasions. Which has the greatest factoring? I think back to the election, for example, when Mr. Getty actually drew the third highest number of total votes, and if Shirley had gotten as many votes as Mr. Getty, it would have been a landslide in this constituency, because he drew about 8,000 votes. If Shirley had gotten 8,000 votes here, it would have been a phenomenal landslide, both in terms of turnout . . .

MRS. McCLELLAN: I think we had the same plurality. It was 71 percent, so I think you're getting into an issue, Frank, that I'm having problems with. I'm sorry, I shouldn't interrupt, but

if you're going to talk about that voter turnout, voter representation, weighting of votes . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: No. What I'm getting at is total numbers here.

MRS. McCLELLAN: . . . then we're getting into an issue that's beyond what we're talking about here. You know, I may cast one vote, but then you've got a question of how many of my constituents I contacted to get that, and let's not get into that, because you probably aren't going to get your opinion from 31,000 as close as I may from 9,000.

MR. BRUSEKER: No doubt.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Because I know every person in this room, and there are not many rooms in Chinook constituency that I can walk into that I don't. I suggest that you do not enjoy that same ability in the city. So I think we shouldn't put things like that in with the issue.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, that's fair comment. I disagree with you, but that's all right.

The question I have is this: which factors, then, become the most important factors? We've heard concerns about areas, the miles that Shirley or any other rural MLA drives. So how do we factor them in, and which factor becomes the most important? Is it the people? Is it the number of miles? Is it the number of school boards? Is it the number of hospital boards? Which factor becomes the most important, and which comes second, and how do you factor them all in?

MR. BUTLER: Well, Frank, I think it's pretty hard to do that, and I don't think it's possible. But in your urban area, there are other boards; there are other buffer zones before they get to the MLA. You've got your councils; you've got your aldermen, which we don't have here. They're not used to the same extent anyway, because as Shirley said, everybody knows the MLA, and they know practically everybody, and the first thing they do is get on the phone. I know that in the office complex I was in in the Legislature, there was one urban MLA in that little complex. The rest of us were rural, and we used to get, anyway, 10 to 1 telephone calls and letters to what the urban man did. Although he represented a lot more people, he didn't have the work to do in the Legislature in terms of telephone calls to answer, letters to answer, and things to look into.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much.

Just before we have a short, 10-minute coffee break – and I stress 10 minutes, because there's coffee and juice and some doughnuts in the outer room – Bob will identify the next six participants so that when we reconvene, they may be seated. Bob?

MR. PRITCHARD: The next six are Greg Sheppard, Bruce Dillabough, Pat Hansen, John Simkin, Bert McFadyen, and Alec Simpson.

[The committee recessed from 2:50 p.m. to 3 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'll reconvene. Eva, we'll begin with you.

MRS. NIELSEN: I'm from the village of Delia, and I'm here today to represent the council of the village.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not sure people can hear you. Can you turn your chair sideways just a bit, Eva, and then you're projecting your voice out.

MRS. NIELSEN: Okay. This is a brief brief, and I'll make it a little briefer; I'll skip the preamble and just get right into it.

Because of the great disparity in population among the constituencies in Alberta, in Delia we are apprehensive of any boundary changes that could result in difficulty for the more sparsely populated areas such as the constituency of Chinook.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They can't hear you, Eva.

MRS. NIELSEN: That's as loud as I can talk.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're closing the doors at the back.

MRS. NIELSEN: We recognize that Chinook has only 9,197 voters, well below the recommended 25 percent average; however, given the vast geographical area of the constituency, we feel that any enlargement of its boundaries would not be in the best interests of the constituents.

In terms of time and distance the rural MLA has a much more demanding schedule than an urban MLA. For example, the MLA for a Calgary riding may have a 10-minute drive from his home to his constituency office. In contrast, the MLA for Chinook must drive at least 135 kilometres just from her home to reach her constituency office in Hanna. In addition, she must also be accessible to the needs of the towns and villages, the municipal districts, school divisions, hospital boards, and recreational boards within her constituency, as well as attending to the demands of her Legislature appointments. We feel that any increase in the boundaries of this constituency would place an unacceptable and unreasonable burden on the MLA for the constituency.

We are further concerned that a recommendation of representation by population would eventually leave rural Alberta with very little voice in the concerns of our government. As rural areas seem to be depopulating, electoral boundaries will be enlarged in response to the decreasing population. This trend will result in the reduction of rural MLAs, and rural representation in the Legislature will be virtually lost. The special requirements of the rural communities such as agricultural issues, an adequate system of roads, the economic development of our towns and villages, and the provision of educational, medical, and recreational services will not receive the priority they deserve. We urge the committee to consider the ramifications of reduced rural representation in the Legislature, and to seek alternatives other than representation by population.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Eva.

Are there comments or questions, from panel members first? Anyone else to add to what Eva has said? Thank you. Okay, Bruce next.

Just before Bruce begins, during the coffee break we caucused to get our calendars together and see if we could find an appropriate date when we could come back to Hanna, and also because of requests from a neighbouring constituency, Wainwright, and the date is Monday, March 5. We can be here

at 11 a.m. in the courtroom. We'd be here from 11 to 12:30; we'd then depart to go up to Wainwright and have hearings there. So Monday, March 5.

We would take the briefs in the same order in which we have them recorded today. Now, if there's any extra time and there's someone else who comes along, we'll accommodate them, but please understand we would have to leave at 12:30 in order to get to Wainwright to accommodate the folk in that community. Okay? Now, it won't be advertised other than by your MLA. If the reporters from the papers are here, we won't be putting more ads in the paper. It's really a follow-up to take care of those briefs we could not accommodate today. All right?

Bruce, go ahead, please.

MR. DILLABOUGH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am a farmer from Acadia Valley. I sit on council there, and I'm submitting this brief on behalf of the council of the MD of Acadia No. 34.

It's with great concern that we the council of the MD of Acadia submit our views on electoral boundaries and any proposals for change at this time. In addressing this problem, a few questions have to be asked and some answers given. Quite possibly, when all things are weighed, it will be agreed that our electoral boundaries are equitable and that changes as suggested by Justice McLachlin would most likely create more problems for Albertans than they would solve.

The first question is: what should electoral boundaries represent? If provincial electoral boundaries are established solely for the purpose of representation by population, then possibly some changes are in order. Our feeling, though, is that in establishing boundaries, not only people must be represented but also areas. We must represent equally many sectors of our province. The people are our most important resource, and this must be reflected initially. But we have other areas very important to Alberta that must have representation. We as rural Albertans are the keepers of many of our natural resources; that is, forests, water, wildlife, land. We live day to day and hand in hand with these important resources, and this fact must be reflected when boundaries are considered.

The second question: who should electoral boundaries represent? The figures we now have represent the voting public over 18 years of age who have been enumerated. It is quite possible we might find that rural areas still have larger families than our urban counterparts. This being the case, the votes may in fact be representing more people than a similar number from an urban riding.

The third question is: how do we deal with the vastness and accessibility to our MLAs? Even under present boundaries our MLAs in rural constituencies are finding it hard if not impossible to maintain reasonable contact with their constituents. Larger areas will only magnify the problem.

The fourth question is: how do MLAs cope with the workload? Although some MLAs in some cases represent fewer people, in most cases they represent many different boards, municipal governments, and organizations. Any further increase in the size of these ridings would virtually swamp the efforts of any MLA to adequately represent the area.

As Albertans we have three main tiers of government. Our government is structured so that at the municipal level we do have basic representation by population. At the provincial level representation by population is still a basic consideration, but now other factors must be considered: those of area and those of resource. At the federal government level we must use

population as a consideration, but even more we must reflect both area and resource. The problems associated with running the land are not all people-related, but all are people-represented. Where the concerns come from that need most government attention are not always where the most people are located. We feel that this must be dealt with when electoral boundaries are considered.

We suggest two possible scenarios be given consideration, the first being a simple, or maybe not so simple, formula linking population and area. Quite possibly we have an equitable system in place at the present time, should this possibility be considered. The second suggestion – and, as Ms Barrett mentioned earlier, maybe some of this is food for thought – is to consider total reconstructing of our government. At the local level we come nearer to representation by population. If from the municipal levels of government a body was formed similar to a Senate and this body was to have certain opportunities for input at the provincial level, we may be able to come a step closer to rep by pop and still maintain regional representation as we so desire.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Bruce.

Any questions or comments? Any additions from anyone present? Thank you.

Pat.

MRS. HANSEN: I'm Pat Hansen from Craigmyle, and I'm speaking on behalf of my own family.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me; could you speak up a bit, Pat?

MRS. HANSEN: Yeah.

We realize that under the present electoral boundaries areas such as Chinook are overrepresented if population is the only criterion for setting boundaries. However, because of distances involved, it would seem to us that it would be more difficult for a member of the Legislature to properly represent Chinook than a much more heavily populated area in the city. If boundaries in rural Alberta were to be redrawn and constituencies made larger, it would be virtually impossible for an MLA to even make an attempt at fair and equal representation. We would therefore urge this committee to freeze the parameters of rural boundaries. If adjustments must be made, we would ask that they be made in the urban centres. We feel the additional costs would be offset by the benefits to the rural constituents of maintaining at least the present level of representation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Pat.

Pam?

MS BARRETT: You just made me think of something, Pat. You see on here the relative size of Chinook; it's one of the medium sized, sort of, rural ridings. The bid that you make – would you make the same bid if you were in one of the geographically smaller ridings, or would you think that some of the geographically smaller ridings could be enhanced, if you were trying to . . .

MRS. HANSEN: No. I think the boundaries should be left the way they are.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Then it doesn't occur to you . . .

MRS. HANSEN: I don't think areas should be grouped together, and I don't think MLAs should be eliminated.

MS BARRETT: Okay. But what I'm asking is – you're making the case on behalf of your constituency, which is geographically quite big. Your case wouldn't change if, geographically, you were half or a quarter the size? You wouldn't make any change at all?

MRS. HANSEN: No. I don't think you make progress by eliminating things. You would eliminate MLAs, then, and group them together?

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm not sure. That's what I'm asking you.

MRS. HANSEN: Isn't that what you'd do if you were grouping them together, though? Wouldn't the MLAs be eliminated?

MS BARRETT: Yes, some could be. Yeah.

MRS. HANSEN: I don't think the boundary should be redrawn.

MS BARRETT: Okay. But that holds, Pat, no matter how big or how small, geographically, the riding is?

MRS. HANSEN: That's what I would say.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? Any other questions or comments? Thanks, Pat.

Okay, Alec.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm here on behalf of two people. I'm the administrator for the town of Hanna, and the Business Revitalization Zone Board has asked me to present their submission. As well, I'll be presenting the town of Hanna's.

It is indeed a pleasure to submit the following presentation to this committee on electoral boundaries. I regret not being able to present this in person, as a previous commitment takes me out of town at this time. I would ask that this submission be read into the minutes of this committee meeting, if the committee is in agreement.

As co-ordinator of the Hanna Business Revitalization Zone I represent the business community of the town of Hanna, approximately 175 businesses. Because of this representation, it is my intention to focus on the impact of electoral boundary changes in the Chinook riding in general and the town of Hanna in specific. From this it is my intention to demonstrate to the committee that electoral boundaries are not simply arbitrary lines on a map which can easily be changed to accommodate more people without considering the economic effects, the character of these areas, and the geographic considerations that often bind these ridings together. This may not be true of all constituencies falling short of the 25 percent factor of 14,014 population minimum, but I do feel it is true in the Chinook constituency.

Political boundaries affect our attitudes and perceptions. How often have we heard the provincial government of Alberta cry foul because central Canada seems to always get the lion's share as a result of population? A real concern of rural Alberta is that with the proposed electoral boundary changes we will be crying foul of our urban counterparts here in Alberta in the years ahead.

There is a common perception that all small towns want to

grow to become cities. This perception, often held by urbanites, is far from accurate. Small towns, while they seek an element of growth, tend to rely more heavily on stability and maintenance of what they have. Historically, most towns becoming cities are an exception, not the rule.

Hanna, a town of 3,000, has over the years evolved from a local agricultural centre to a regional centre partly due to its west-central location in the Chinook constituency. By "regional" I mean that several governmental and nongovernmental agencies have found Hanna's location the best spot from which to service the area, which generally is the area within the Chinook constituency. Any shift in the central geographic location of Hanna brought on by radical electoral boundary changes would trigger an economic decline from Hanna back to a local agricultural centre. This could take a period of years but would become a trend over time as a new electoral constituency shifted towards a larger centre of population within the constituency having different needs.

The economics of a small town are fragile and respond more dramatically to subtle changes than its urban counterparts do. This committee must consider historic and geographic trends, and not only capture inadequate population within its boundaries. The Hanna concern is that sweeping changes to the Chinook electoral boundaries could affect the economic stability of Hanna's role in that constituency. In looking at the Chinook constituency boundaries, one can see that they are aligned very closely with that region of Alberta known as special areas. These special areas, born out of the adversity of the Depression, were developed to foster reclaiming the land, to re-establish the fragile agricultural economy, and to provide an ongoing support to this area. Special areas must deal with an often unpredictable, harsh climate and semiarid soils.

The Chinook constituency is a unique area with a fragile economy and special needs. In terms of geographic size, Chinook is one of the larger southern constituencies. Its population is spread throughout in small clusters, making communication between elected officials and their electorate a difficult task. To enlarge the constituency would see a decline in the attention that this unique area needs from its elected officials.

It is felt that the integrity of the current Chinook electoral boundaries should be maintained. Any change should be done with caution, for reasons mentioned above, and not merely to capture the required population of 14,014 minimum.

Submitted by Gerry Gibbons, co-ordinator, Hanna business revitalization board.

The council of the town of Hanna is pleased to have the opportunity to make representation to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. We commend the decision of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to permit public participation in the electoral boundary review process. As an elected body the council understands the value of public input on matters that affect its constituents.

The council wishes to make three suggestions to the committee for their consideration, and they are: one, that there not be an increase in the number of Members of the Legislative Assembly; two, that when establishing boundaries of an electoral division, consideration be given to a commonality of interests of the constituents of the division; and three, that all constituents of an electoral division derive an equal benefit from its representative in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

The council does not want to make its presentation on the basis of rural versus urban. It would seem that once a member is elected to the Legislative Assembly, he or she is not representing just his constituents but all of the electors and their children as a whole. All of the residents of Alberta should be treated as a family, with all members being treated as equal and receiving the same benefit regardless of location. Now, I know that family



members do squabble once in a while, but we do like the idea of being treated as family members. It is important that everyone in the province have the same benefit without discrimination.

The council makes its first suggestion because of the increased costs to the taxpayer that will necessarily be associated with an expanded membership of the Legislative Assembly. In this era of budget restraint, council is of the opinion that we must restrict increased costs as much as possible. We believe that the province of British Columbia has 75 members for a larger population. It is council's contention that adequate representation can be accomplished by the present number of 83 members.

As mentioned earlier, council does not believe that there should be a distinction between rural or urban interests. However, with regard to their second suggestion, they believe that some consideration should be given to whether or not some electoral divisions could be established having in mind minority groups or ethnic interests. Council is of the opinion that it would be easier for a Member of the Legislative Assembly to represent his or her constituents' interests if they were generally similar in nature. It is important that everyone's interests be represented as well as is possible.

Council's last suggestion is of greatest significance to them. From a review of the transcripts of previous hearings it would seem that the committee will find it to be of considerable significance to them as well. There has been much made of certain court decisions rendered in British Columbia, particularly with reference to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 3, and the committee has received a number of representations regarding this particular concern. Therefore, we will not repeat a lot of that, even though it in fact formed a background in our preparations towards making our presentation today.

Firstly, we wish to state that we disagree with the interpretation that section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms implies that representation by individual Members of the Legislative Assembly must be supported by an equal number of eligible voters. As we interpret this section, it simply means that you have the right to vote for a member to represent you, and if you want, you can serve as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Nothing in that section, as far as we can determine, suggests that there need be an equal number of eligible voters available to ensure balanced representation by a Member of the Legislative Assembly. We do not believe that to be qualified for membership therein implies that those members not only are entitled to one vote each, but that the votes be equal, as given by Mr. Justice Meredith of the Supreme Court of British Columbia as his reason for judgment in *Dixon versus the Attorney General of British Columbia*.

Section 3 does not even guarantee a citizen the right to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly. It only guarantees you the right to be qualified. In our minds that means a citizen may join a political party and endeavour to be nominated for election as a representative of that party. Even if you do not have a particular political affiliation, you still may have to become qualified by making a deposit to an elections officer. One further point regarding section 3. When looking at section 3 on its own, it says every citizen has the right to vote. Therefore, it may follow that anyone born in Canada may vote immediately following birth. Now, we understand that immediately following birth they generally do exercise their right to expression. Our point is that section 3 cannot be interpreted on its own.

Section 15(1) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the section that deals with the equality of rights and, therefore,

qualifies the right to vote and the right to be qualified. Section 15(1) reads as follows.

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Our contention is: the law will become whatever legislation is adopted regarding the establishment of electoral boundaries and the number of eligible voters there will be within these boundaries. Pursuant to section 15(1), therefore, everyone shall have a right to equal benefit under the law. What is equal benefit? The definitions of "benefit" we have found that would be applicable in this instance are as follows: (a) anything which is for the good of a person or thing; (b) something that promotes well-being. You have heard many arguments about equality of votes and many arguments about there not needing to be an equality of votes, so we will not repeat these. We simply say that on the basis of our interpretation of sections 3 and 15(1) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, there does not need to be an equality of votes.

Based on that assumption, we offer a solution to the establishment of electoral boundaries that will guarantee equal benefit to eligible voters and all citizens in Alberta. In order that representation by the Members of the Legislative Assembly ensures there is an equality of that which is good for the citizens of Alberta and promotes their well-being, we suggest the following factors must be taken into account when establishing electoral boundaries: equal access to the Legislative Assembly, equal access to our representatives, and equal access to provincial government services. If we cannot have these services equally throughout the province, then we are not deriving an equal benefit. Since it is impossible to ensure equal access – in essence, equal benefit – we propose that accommodation be made in the number of citizens that occupy an electoral division. The Legislative Assembly is situated in Edmonton, most of the provincial government services are situated there, and our representative is in Edmonton most of the time. We therefore suggest that the population of citizens within the electoral divisions in Edmonton should be larger than anywhere else in the province. Electoral divisions surrounding the city of Edmonton may have a smaller population because of relatively poorer access than those in the city. Those electoral divisions in Calgary may be similar in size to those surrounding the city of Edmonton because of ease in making flight connections between the two largest cities and so on.

Factors to be considered that we suggest are as follows: time and cost of travel, time and cost of communication, number of elected jurisdictions in an electoral division, number of community leagues in an electoral division. It is this last matter of consideration that we feel is most significant to all citizens of Alberta. We support, without qualification, the terms of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms when it says that every citizen shall have the right of equal benefit and therefore contend that the population of each electoral division should not be equal in number. Some divisions, in fact, may be occupied by as few as 9,197 eligible voters to ensure equality of benefit, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Questions? Comments? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just in your list of considerations, the one you went through, community leagues, other representatives, you've left out population. Is that an oversight?

MR. SIMPSON: Oh, no. I would suspect that would be one of our first considerations but having in mind those other matters. Yes, it would be an oversight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Any other comments? Okay, thank you. I noticed you got two briefs in there.  
Okay, John.

MR. SIMKIN: John Simkin, representing Neutral Hills school division. Mine is fairly brief. This brief is submitted from a rural area with a rural perspective. Therein lie our major concerns. Rural is different from urban. The boundary changes that would result from an easy mathematical calculation concerning numbers and consequent redrawing of boundaries would leave rural Alberta at the mercy of urban whims and attitudes.

All the obvious differences have already been pointed out to your committee, but as rural people, they cannot be overstated. Rural Alberta is definitely a minority in population, but has the importance of agriculture suffered as drastic a decline in percentage terms? Does fair representation have a strict mathematical application? Common sense says the answer to both questions is no. Basically, any redistribution would be to the detriment of the present rural voice our MLAs already have.

The changes we envision could be likened to the situation in Canada of east versus west. Alberta in the federal scheme has approached the problem with the "Senate reform" idea, but obviously those who have the control do not want a lessening of said power and control. This scenario would likely repeat itself in a provincial situation if rural and urban representation becomes too far out of balance. If we take travel time, diversity of problems within already large boundaries, the accessibility of the MLA is a different case in rural and urban ridings. Communications, with the RITE line, fax, et cetera, are much improved, but none of them are as effective as a face-to-face approach to problems. To effectively discharge an MLA's duties must be time consuming for all but must also present special demands on rural MLAs.

We need a representation that reflects all that happens outside city boundaries. Basically, rural are producers while urbans consume. It follows that one depends upon the other economically, but an unbalanced voice in government could soon lead to an abuse of voting power by whichever had the largest voice. An example of using numbers could be police presence in the province. If the RCMP used a convenient number – once again, back to an easy mathematical idea – Chinook constituency would not have the presence it now has. Maybe someone in their department has realized the distinction. About the closest we could come was the city of Red Deer. They are policed by the RCMP, approximately 60,000 population and 75 members. That works out to about 8,000 – that's the total population – per member. We'd be a long ways from that. So maybe some common sense has prevailed by realizing the differences.

We hope that a made-in-Alberta decision based on sound criteria could stand up to court challenges. It is also interesting to note the differences in application in Manitoba and Saskatchewan of the B.C. decision. The differences occur probably in large part because of the composition of the panel that changed the boundaries. The composition of this committee and subsequent commission could very well have a large bearing on our own changes. Hopefully we can interpret these hearings as an attempt by the government to give rural Alberta the fairest representation possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, John.

Questions or comments? Anyone else? Okay, thank you.  
Greg.

MR. SHEPPARD: Mr. Chairman, I should first point out that while I'm presenting this submission, Mr. Jack Sumner and Mr. Jim Andrew are up here as board members and they'll be answering questions.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, the special areas would like to thank you for this opportunity to input concerns relative to the process. For focus, we'd like to state initially that our general concern is with the possibility of reduced representation in the Legislature. It is very strongly felt that something close to the existing rural/urban ratio must be maintained. We have, of course, the federal example, as has been eloquently expressed here. This concern regarding strictly population representation and the disparities it would produce was recognized and dealt with in the U.S.A. and other countries where some form of geographical representation was established balancing the representation by population. The failure to balance the representation situation in Canada has contributed, we all surely agree, to a centralization of development and control federally. Certainly the same tendency exists within provincial boundaries. The provincial government has, laudably, taken steps to decentralize some departments. Most other factors, however – notably economics, social amenities, and the urban issue focus in the Legislature – mitigate in favour of centralization. Disturbing the existing rural/urban ratio can only further contribute to such centralization.

Specifics. Issues of a rural nature often have a greater bearing on provincial affairs and concerns than population distribution indicates. Transportation, for example: historically the dollars available have not been adequate for equitable road system development in sparsely populated areas while the need is critical relative to our resources and people. Existing rural industry as well as rural Albertans require site access and market access infrastructure in sparsely populated areas, the subtleties of which will not likely be appropriately addressed should the rural voice be lessened.

Industry and agriculture. As the provincial government continues with its policy of diversifying Alberta's industry, rural industrial issues will likely require increased attention but will likely receive less if the representation status is altered in favour of urban areas. Much revenue is generated rurally, or at least from areas where representation by population would prove disproportionate relative to revenue generation – examples, of course, are oil and gas and power generation and agriculture – the implication again being that an urban focus on revenue generated rurally cannot be sensitive to the impact on rural areas and residents.

From an environment standpoint, balancing resource development and conservation in addition to a myriad of specific environmental issues requires a greater rural voice than the population distribution allows.

MLA travel has also been dealt with here quite extensively, and also the municipal governments and boards issue. However, I think it's worth repeating in going on. Rural constituencies already pose a problem as far as physical distance is concerned. This is especially noticeable in attendance at hearings such as this and meetings, et cetera, and has a real effect on access generally. Clearly, enlarging rural constituencies has negative ramifications from an access perspective alone.

An increase in the number of urban MLAs and a decrease in the number of rural MLAs would aggravate an already tenuous situation relative to the municipal governments and the boards they have to deal with. As has been pointed out, in the Chinook constituency Mrs. McClellan deals with a dozen or more hospital districts, half a dozen school divisions, and a dozen municipalities or parts thereof, compared to considerably less in an average urban riding. The MLAs are a major line of access to the provincial government for the municipal governments, school boards, and hospital boards, and these boards must deal with a broad scope of complex issues which affect constituents in rural areas. The requirement of a rural MLA to adequately represent many elected bodies is already an onerous task and illustrates the need to at least maintain the present representation ratio.

Although most of these concerns are somewhat subjective, the overriding concern is that the nature of the issues affecting rural and urban constituencies are so often very disparate. A disruption of the current rural to urban representation ratio will aggravate not only the very real inequities already emerging but also the sense of abandonment rurally, which feeling should again be paralleled to the prairies versus central Canada concerns.

While on the surface representation by population appears to be the only democratic alternative, a case can be made for the establishment of an offsetting balance to such representation. Such constitutional challenges or adjustments as may be required in light of the McLachlin decision in British Columbia and subsequent ramifications must be vigorously pursued.

In summary, the special areas urge the provincial government to maintain the present urban to rural constituency ratio.

Thank you for this opportunity for input. We trust that the results of your formidable task will be an equitable, model representative system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'd asked a presenter earlier about the rural depopulation, currently having 60 percent population residing in urban Alberta and 40 percent in rural Alberta. I'm wondering, if we continue along those trends, do you see a point where the 50-50 ratio would have to change?

MR. SUMNER: Yeah. It can change, yes. But why not wait till that happens before . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: We're at 60-40 now. I'm asking you at what point. You know, if we were to come back here in, say, 10 years and there would be 65-35, would the arguments change all that much in 10 years? I only point that out. I wonder if you've got a number.

MR. SUMNER: I know what you're saying. Jim, do you want to deal with that or . . .

Yeah. There has to be a point where there's equal representation in what you're saying. But as of today, are there problems with the way the situation sits? Are there any groups that are being neglected or suffering from the way the situation is today?

MR. SIGURDSON: There are groups that have come before this committee that argue that the representation, as it currently sits, is not fair to those people, based totally on population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, although I made the comment in my

opening remarks that prior to the McLachlin decision in B.C. – and I've been involved in and out of politics since 1971 – I had not heard a concern expressed. That's not to suggest there may not have been one or some someplace, but it was not an issue raised either at party conventions or gatherings of urban groups or with urban groups of people.

Do you want to finish?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, other than there have been suggestions that it's not fair based on the Charter as it now stands, and that's what we're having to deal with, the Charter.

MR. SUMNER: We need two more charters. We need a charter of common sense and a charter of human responsibility as well as this other one.

MR. SIGURDSON: I won't disagree with you.

MR. SUMNER: Until we have those other two charters, this other Charter is going to cause us nothing but a lot of problems, as we're having today. Common sense should prevail in a situation like this.

MR. SIGURDSON: I don't disagree with you, but the likelihood of us getting a charter of obligations and a charter of common sense prior to this committee having to report isn't that great.

MR. SUMNER: Another thing we're overlooking is our young people. More and more of our young people – now you're having the same problem – are not being involved in politics. You hear that at election time, as a good example: "Are you going to go and vote?" "What the hell's the use; they don't listen to us anyway." Out here . . . Like you're having a problem, we're having a problem, but two wrongs don't make a right. If we can do something in the rural areas to keep our young people involved, make them aware of the implications, the politics of the province – and if we have our MLAs spread too thin, the young people will not be able to keep in touch with them. You've got more access to your young people than our MLAs have. That is one thing we've got to . . . It doesn't matter too much about us; it's our younger people. I'm sorry. I'm a little older than you fellows. It's our young people we want to keep interested in this thing because we're about ready to turn the thing over to them, and I think there should be more emphasis on something that will interest the young people. Perhaps the 60-40 you were talking about is the wrong way to approach our young people. I don't know. I haven't got the answers; you haven't got the answers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A brief response by Tom, then I have Jack.

MR. SIGURDSON: No, I thought you were through.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're through?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Jack.

MR. GORMAN: I think the point needs to be made based on recent deliberations in Manitoba where they looked at the

problem in Winnipeg. Sixty percent of the population lives in one city, so the rural development problem got to be a concern. The Manitoba community newspapers and provincial government did some pretty extensive study. They started taking a look at the social costs of having all the opportunities located in one centre.

In response to your question, what then tends to happen is that if you focus on the rep by pop principle, you get an intangible but nevertheless a factor – and you can look at Mexico City or any of the large cities in the world where this rural/urban shift is really happening. Once this urban mentality thing takes over, the problem accelerates. So in response to your question, you can't look at that point whereby you have to start changing representation. To protect the social balance of the province, you have to maintain a balance between rural and urban thinking. Now, that's an intangible, and you can't deal with it in terms of numbers.

I can turn that Manitoba material over to you. It's in concise form. It's very, very interesting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you? Okay. Thanks, Jack.  
Anyone else? Yes?

MRS. WESTERLUND: I just wanted to ask a question. Did the British Columbia decision ever have an appeal?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it did not. The British Columbia government chose not to appeal it. You may be aware that the judge who rendered the decision, Justice McLachlin, was recently appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. [interjection] The Meredith decision . . . All right. Go back to the sequence.

Professor Dixon took the B.C. government to court. Justice McLachlin heard the case. McLachlin ruled in favour of Dixon. Dixon went back to court and basically said, "Now, you've got to change your boundaries immediately; they're ultra vires." That case was dealt with by Justice Meredith, and Meredith said – and I'm paraphrasing badly – that while it's proper for the courts to rule on whether or not laws conform with our Constitution and with our Charter, it's not appropriate for the courts to dictate to the governments a time line or tell you you have to change it immediately. So in other words, they gave the government time, and the government has used time to adjust its boundaries.

All right, we're ready to move on then. Thanks very much. Bert.

MR. McFADYEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The two Jacks just stole most of my thunder, so I'll make it quite brief because I realize we're working up against a time constraint. I'm a farmer from Acadia Valley. Like my colleague down the table here, I spent some time on the municipal council, and I have operated two other businesses besides the farm.

I'd like to approach this – and let's forget about the figures and all the numbers we've heard this afternoon just for a minute, because I'd like to put a little bit of a moral issue here to the people, particularly the people that come from the urban areas that sit on this committee and also sit in the Legislature.

We have been experiencing in this area an outflow of population since the 1930s. It's been a problem all along. It's getting worse, and it's getting to the point now that we have to look to the urban people for understanding to short-circuit some of the things that are beginning to happen. The decision on the lease rights and now some of the talk about limiting some of the

inputs we use in agriculture are only the tip of the iceberg. If we crystal-ball a little bit, I think we could see an urban strangulation of agriculture in the province of Alberta if it continues the way it is, unless there's some responsibility injected into the representation in the urban areas. I absolutely don't have any idea that we can maintain the type of representation we have now from the rural areas. I hope we can hang onto it a little longer so we can get that responsibility starting to roll in the cities.

The dispensation of services, the access to services that was mentioned from the town of Hanna is becoming a bigger and bigger problem in rural areas. It's time the urban people started giving us some of their access back in representation and possibly in some monetary ways. We as farmers sit in this area, we sell on a world market, we buy on the North American market. We're in a cost/price squeeze because of the cost of labour in Canada, and until the urban people decide and start paying us more for what we're doing, a compensatory rate – I'm not talking about getting rich; it'd be nice – we're going to see the same two huge vacuums in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton sucking everything out of the rural areas of Alberta. It's a moral issue, and it's something I'd like the people in the cities to start thinking about, because the perception I have where I sit is that they don't think they have any responsibility for everything they take out of the rural areas.

I would like to cast a vote for the Triple E Senate, or maintaining what we have or eventually a Triple E Senate, because I think eventually we'll have to look at something like that in Alberta.

The rural MLA is a friend and a neighbour, and each one of you knows that when a friend and neighbour approaches you, you must talk to him, you cannot ignore him. The urban elector views his MLA as a businessman, maybe not per se, but he's used to dealing with people in businesses. Therefore, when he approaches you he makes an appointment, and when he's brushed aside a couple or three times because of a very, very heavy schedule – and I'm not saying it shouldn't be done – it's much, much different than our rural MLA walking down the street in Hanna and brushing off a friend or neighbour. That must be taken into consideration when you're looking at balancing the books on representation.

I won't keep you any longer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Bert.  
Comments? Go ahead, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just a comment, because when I go out and canvass and talk to my constituents, I am often amazed about the number of occasions . . . I have a constituency that's fully contained inside an urban area, although I do have 600 active farm families because I've got the northeast corner of Edmonton that has been annexed. A lot of the farms were annexed into the city. But when I'm canvassing in that exclusively urban area, because, as you point out, people have left the farm in other parts of Alberta and have come to the city, I'm frequently asked questions about agriculture. So people in the urban centres are very much concerned about what's happening in rural Alberta, and they do challenge their members of the Legislature on questions of agriculture. Now, I can assure you that I do not understand the problems of agriculture as well as my rural counterparts, but we are challenged by our constituents. So you're not in a vacuum.

MR. McFADYEN: No. I likened Calgary and Edmonton to a vacuum.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I'm an Edmonton MLA.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions or comments? Okay. We've had 19 presenters tabled so far. We've had 20 briefs; we have 13 to go. So our recommendation is that we take three more today; we'll then have our wrap-up comments. That leaves 10 briefs to be dealt with on March 5 when we come back.

Shirley.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I have a question as to whether you will accept any others when you come back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Time permitting, yes. We won't need to go through the slide presentation again. The only constraint we'd have is allowing enough time to get from here up to Wainwright for a meeting there.

MR. SIGURDSON: How long is the drive from here to Wainwright?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Two hours, two and a half.

MS BARRETT: Hey, half an hour if you're going the legal limit, Shirley.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much.

MR. PRITCHARD: The next three names are Doug Lehman, Art Kary, and Ron Allison.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the things we'll do on the 5th is begin at 10:30 in the morning. We need some time that morning to allow the Edmonton and Calgary members to get here.

MRS. McCLELLAN: It's easy. I drive it Saturday mornings often, and we don't have to get up much before 5:30. That gives you time for a cup of coffee in your car. You can make it easily.

MS BARRETT: Does that mean you're going to give us a lift, Shirley?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So we'll start at 10:30 on the 5th. Okay, Ann, we're proceeding with you first.

MRS. RODVANG: I'm Ann Rodvang. I'm the councillor of division one in the county of Paintearth. This is a brief prepared by the county of Paintearth No. 18 for submission to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. I'm either sorry or glad that you've heard so much of it before.

The council of the county of Paintearth No. 18 has had the opportunity to review the material put out by the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries and other related material and would like to present the following observations and comments. At the present time Alberta is divided into 83 electoral constituencies, of which 42 are predominantly urban and 41 are rural. We do not feel that a larger number of MLAs would be justifiable or advantageous considering the need for fiscal responsibility in Alberta.

It should be pointed out that in some parts of Canada the average population of constituencies is much higher than here

in Alberta. For example, Ontario has an average population of 70,000 per electoral division compared to Alberta with an average population of 30,000 per MLA. The rural ridings that are much below average in population are, in general, much larger than average in area. For example, Chinook is one of the larger constituencies. At present it is relatively homogenous in that it has farms and ranches scattered sparsely throughout the area, with many small towns and villages which depend mainly on agriculture and some oil industry. The region has similar geographic and climatic concerns, with low and erratic rainfall, soils ranging from brown to dark brown, with generally low productivity as compared to areas north and west. There has been little opportunity for industry other than resource extraction with its high capital and low labour requirements. These factors do not indicate any future increase in population but will probably lead to a further reduction of farms and viable towns. Does this mean that we are to be faced with ever expanding electoral boundaries?

While we recognize the legitimate desire of our urban neighbours for representation by population, we are concerned that our rural constituencies will become unmanageably large. The constraints of travel and time make it difficult for an MLA to adequately represent the people now, without further amalgamation. As well, further increases in riding size will inevitably combine dissimilar geoclimatic areas, to their possible disadvantage.

In the past we have discussed the possible subsidization of electoral candidates and elected representatives to cover increasing travel costs in large electoral districts.

We do recognize that there are large discrepancies in constituency populations. Our concern that geography as well as population should be taken into account for riding determination is not without precedent. Witness the Alberta government promotion of the Triple E Senate concept. If representation by area is legitimate at the national level, surely continuing consideration must be given to the large size of the rural ridings.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views. I'll get you some copies.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: Ann, when you talk about subsidizing, can you go a little further? MLAs get, through Members' Services, an allowance to do some travel. It's only 40,000 kilometres for rural MLAs, and I know that a number of rural MLAs . . . I use 40,000 kilometres a year as an urban MLA. I know that rural members - Bob, you drive 100,000 a year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: About 85,000.

MR. SIGURDSON: Eighty-five thousand. Is that what you're talking about, the extra subsidy coming up?

MRS. RODVANG: That is what we meant, yes. Extra subsidization and perhaps extra subsidization for another constituency office or that type of thing. Or assistance: just, in general, a little help.

MR. SIGURDSON: Would you be doing that as county of Paintearth?

MRS. RODVANG: This brief?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, those conversations you've had, talking to assist . . .

MRS. RODVANG: Oh, in the county of Paintearth and just in the constituency, in the neighbourhood.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MRS. RODVANG: That about the subsidization was a definite point when we were discussing it in the county council meeting.

MR. SIGURDSON: Uh huh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Ann.  
Anyone else? Others?

MR. KARY: My name is Art Kary. I represent the Big Country Health Unit, which is based here in Hanna. We also have an office in Oyen as well as in Consort.

The Big Country Health Unit serves an area which lies wholly within the constituency boundaries of Chinook. It comprises all of special areas 2, 3, and 4, as well as the MD of Acadia Valley. I represent special area 4. As such, we are represented by one MLA who is here today. If the boundaries of the constituency were changed in a way that would see parts of our health unit area go into two or three different constituencies, we would feel our representation would be eroded in that we would be dealing with more than one MLA perhaps. We feel this would be much less effective than dealing with one. Also, it would isolate areas of our health unit care from the constituency centre.

Perhaps the greatest concern we have is that representation by population becomes very unfair when one looks at the large urban representation compared to the rural. With the elimination of more rural seats this becomes even more aggravated. Soon rural areas will have very little, if any, say in the Legislature.

Alberta's economy is still basically agricultural, and agriculture is what puts food on tables, urban as well as rural. If we get down to the number of rural constituencies this new proposal suggests - and we don't know just where that figure could stop in the years to come - how effective can that number of MLAs be in looking after the needs of an agricultural province the size of Alberta? What does that do to their workload? How effective can an MLA be when he or she must spend hours in travel alone? An urban MLA can walk across his constituency in less time than a rural one can drive across his or hers.

We feel some changes need to be made to the formula that says representation has to be by population alone. The area factor cannot be ignored to the extent that it is now. Rural Alberta cannot stand the short end of the stick indefinitely. The time for a turnaround is now, and we hope you will consider our submission. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Art.  
Questions? Go ahead, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Is there anything you'd like to specifically recommend to help balance this out?

MR. KARY: No. I lacked preliminary information in preparing my submission. Being constituency president almost since I entered politics when I became old enough to vote, I've seen the original Acadia-Coronation constituency in which I live become

Coronation constituency. I saw Coronation constituency divided, become Sedgewick-Coronation, with additions and deletions. Then I saw Sedgewick-Coronation disappear completely into Chinook and Hanna-Oyen disappear into Chinook, and that was supposed to be the ultimate thing. Now we're faced with the same thing again: Chinook could maybe disappear. It just seems like every time there is something out, we've been right in the middle of it. That's why I am concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Art. You've said it very eloquently. Anyone wish to comment further?  
Okay. Moving on to Ron then.

MR. ALLISON: Mr. Chairman, members of the select committee, and ladies and gentlemen, I'm presenting this brief on behalf of the Veteran and Community Board of Trade. I would like to express our deep concern over the possible elimination of the Chinook constituency, as well as several other rural constituencies, through redistribution as pertaining to the present guidelines. Not only will rural constituencies be lost, but the remaining constituencies will become even larger, which means that rural representation in the provincial Legislature will be downgraded.

We understand that Calgary and Edmonton have more member representation in the Alberta Legislature than there are aldermen on their respective city councils. Some of these constituencies are very small in area because of the high population density. This would enable the city representative to walk the length of his or her constituency in the same length of time it would take a rural representative to drive across his or hers. The same city member can pick up the phone, talk to several thousand people toll free. Not so in Chinook or any other rural constituency.

Within the boundaries of Chinook there are at least 10 - I believe it was mentioned earlier today that there are 12 municipal administrations besides the many other local groups and organizations. This aspect alone creates a massive workload for our rural representative. The provincial government has stated quite strongly that agriculture in Alberta is a top priority. Therefore, it would seem that rural Alberta needs more representation, not less. We would recommend that the rules that dictate the size of the constituencies be reconsidered to take into consideration not only the population base but the area involved and, as well, the very varied social and economic concerns of rural areas. Why place an even greater workload on our rural representatives by enlarging the rural constituencies? This in turn means less representation for the constituents.

In summary, under the guidelines for determining electoral boundaries for the provincial Legislature, representation for the rural elector will continue to deteriorate. The workload for the rural representative will escalate, and, most importantly, the agricultural viewpoint will suffer.

Respectfully submitted by Ron Allison, Veteran and Community Board of Trade.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Ron.

Questions or comments of Ron? Anyone else? Okay, any summation comments you'd like to make? Pam?

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: Just to say that we very much appreciate the time you've taken to come out and make representations to the committee. You can see that the challenges that have been handed to us through court decisions we're not taking lightly. We have some difficult hours and days ahead of us. You've not made it any easier, but then I don't think we expected to have an easy task of it.

I'm very pleased to hear that a number of people who made representations said it's not an us/they situation. Regardless of where we live or what areas we represent, I think all of us are cognizant of the problems. If you represent a rural constituency, you're cognizant of the problems of hunger in the inner-city schools. If you represent an urban constituency, you're cognizant of the problems of rural depopulation and what that does to destabilizing our economy. What we're going to try and do is come up with a situation that best represents all of Alberta, and it's not going to be an easy task. Your representations, as I said, have not made it any easier, but we knew we didn't have an easy task to start with, and I do thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom.  
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: I think Tom said it very well. You know, we're appreciating the time that you've taken to come out here. We're all Albertans, and I know that no matter what we decide, we're not going to please everybody, but I'm convinced we're going to give it the best shot we can. I'm an Albertan born and raised, with some rural roots and some urban roots, and I currently represent an urban riding, but I can tell you from my heart that I don't intend to do anything that's going to hurt this province of ours.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I think I can only echo what the committee members have said. I followed through on the map just to see how far some of you have driven today. I think that's indicative of the interest you're showing in the political process. We appreciate it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Pat.  
Yes, sir.

MR. KLOBERDANZ: If I could allude to that last statement that you just made, I'm one of the ones who is going to have to come back. I drove 110 to get here. I'll go home 110, and I'll come back 110, so I guess what I'm saying is I'm going to be back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I thought we had made arrangements to accommodate all those who had traveled a long distance.

MR. KLOBERDANZ: I have to apologize. I got here pretty late because of the distance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'd like to come up and give us your brief right now, we'll take it.

MR. KLOBERDANZ: I'd rather wait and do it in my turn. You people are shutting down. You've had a long day. I'll come back if I have to walk.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you are available on the 5th . . .

MS BARRETT: If you're ready . . .

MR. KLOBERDANZ: No, that'll be fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're sure? All right.

MR. SIGURDSON: We're also in Wainwright.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, we're also going to be in Wainwright.

Just to repeat the date and the times because we've altered the times slightly. On Monday, March 5, we'll be starting here at 10:30 a.m., running through until 12:30. We'll then convene up in Wainwright at 2:30. That will allow us to get there without breaking our necks on the road, I hope.

MR. SIGURDSON: And spend more money here again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir?

MR. TREDGER: May I ask a question? Is there a possibility that a written brief might be submitted at this time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, there certainly is. Yes, by all means.

MS BARRETT: In fact, we'll keep accepting them right till the end of the month, so if people who came just to listen think of things, write to us.

MR. MARSHALL: One question. It's with regard to leaving a written brief. Like, a lot of them are maybe redundant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, they're not redundant.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, there's power and there's method to redundancy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They're not redundant. There's some repetition. I haven't heard anything redundant.

MR. MARSHALL: A question I have - the brief I will present I will submit as a written brief. Everything I heard is obviously one attitude in this room today. I wondered if you could just briefly . . . There was one reference to it today. Has any person or group of people been hurt by the representation on the basis that it has been lopsided in the rural favour? If someone has been hurt, has that been presented to you in other meetings? If you have time from this to just briefly give us that side of it - because we've heard a lot of one side here, and I'm just wondering.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Question. Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yes, you're right. The other case has been made quite strenuously as well, although not in so many numbers. The case they make in terms of being hurt, as you say, is that the power of their vote is diluted relative to the power of the vote in ridings where there are relatively few people. I'm not sure that they would use the word "hurt," but they do make a very strong case. You know, I'll tell you. You could get some *Hansards* from a couple of hearings. I'm sure Bob could sort them out, and you'd see a couple of the cases that were made.

Some of them are quite powerful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In Edmonton and Calgary.

MS BARRETT: Uh huh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other thing: I earlier said that I had not heard any concerns prior to the court case in British Columbia. Pam pointed out that while I may not have been aware, there were several briefs presented to previous boundaries commissions complaining about the ratio which favoured the rural areas.

I wanted to conclude by just summing up what I hope are some of the key things that each of you has said today, because I think they're really important. I again emphasize how really pleased we as a committee are with your interest. The fact that this has been so well attended – we've heard so many briefs today; we'll be coming back to hear the rest – is indicative. You may have a small constituency populationwise, but no one has showed greater interest than you have right here in the Chinook constituency, and that in itself tells us something.

Right off the bat, the very first brief we heard, where we talked about numbers of communities in a riding that's about 80 miles by 80 miles, gives us some perspective of the area we're in. We heard a lot about geographic distribution, of an equal voice, a Triple E Senate. Triple E Senate came up time and time again in our discussions. There were a number of briefs that talked about the possibility of coterminous boundaries: that we have provincial boundaries follow municipal boundaries and special area boundaries wherever possible and practical.

We heard a number of you say, "Don't try to solve the problem by creating more seats," and we've heard that in other hearings as well. We heard about accessibility to an MLA and the workload that an MLA has, distances traveled. We've heard suggestions that we link the population with an area in developing a formula. Equal access across the province. We heard about a balance between urban and rural Alberta, and that came out loud and clear last evening as well: that we now have a balance with the 42-41 seats. There was concern about maintaining that balance. Again, we heard about the concerns of what's happened between eastern and western Canada with

the population concentration in southern Ontario primarily and how the rest of Canada pays for that. While no one mentioned it today, I think you were all thinking of the high interest rate policy, as an example.

We heard the need for a made-in-Alberta decision, that while there may have been a court case in British Columbia, let's have a made-in-Alberta decision affecting the boundaries in this province.

On the court case, why 25 percent plus or minus? Why not 24 or 26 or 55?

The Charter of Rights: a very eloquent presentation on disadvantaged groups and pointing out some of the disadvantages we have, those of us who choose to live in rural Alberta, in terms of access to services and amenities.

There was a suggestion that we require disproportionate representation to take into account sparsity of population in some areas. The struggle we have to maintain what we now have in rural Alberta: those of us who live in rural Alberta know that it is a struggle to maintain what we have. Concern over reduced representation and an outflow of population: a comment made about the drain that's been going on since the 1930s in the area. On that point, I know how hard your past MLAs worked to get the Sheerness power plant established and what those regional water lines have meant and water into Hanna: things that you could take for granted in another part of the province where water is abundant and plentiful.

I think we've heard how important it is that you consider a number of factors when looking at boundaries, and because you're in a unique part of the province, with sparse population in the Chinook constituency yet the entire constituency what we might call settled – it's all organized; there are roads throughout; there are towns and villages – we know the challenges it surely is in getting to different parts of your riding.

So there was nothing redundant said today. Yes, there was some repetition, but a key thing is you didn't come in here with mimeographed sheets prepared by an office secretary someplace. You came in here with your briefs, briefs that were prepared from the heart, and that means a lot to us.

Thank you very much for coming out.

[The committee adjourned at 4:17 p.m.]