

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[7:14 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will officially declare the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries meeting held here in the city of Lethbridge now open, and with that I'd like to welcome all of you who have come out this evening to be with us. I want to go through the procedures with you so that everyone will feel as comfortable as possible about how we'll deal with the matters this evening.

Now, first of all, you see microphones on the table, and we don't want those to intimidate you. Because this is a select committee of the Legislature, there is a recorded *Hansard* of everything which is said at our meetings, and that recorded *Hansard* is available to the public.

The process we've been following in other communities, and works very well, is that we invite approximately the first six presenters to come forward and sit at the table. We go through the briefs one at a time, and after we've heard from the first presenter, members of the committee will be given an opportunity to ask questions or make comments. We then give those in the audience an opportunity to participate as well. Then we go on to presenter two, and so on. Generally speaking, we can deal with about six briefs per hour. At the moment I think we're at about 15 briefs registered for this evening. A few may come in a bit late, but by extending our time by an hour or a little more, we should be able to accommodate everyone this evening. If by chance we have quite a number who come a bit later, then we'll have to reassess as a committee as to how we handle that. But I'm proud to say that to this point in time, and we don't intend to change our process, we have not turned anyone away. We have been very determined to hear from each and every individual who has something to say. We receive briefs which are written, or we receive presentations which are oral; it makes no matter to us. The key thing is that you be heard.

I'd like to begin by introducing the members of the committee. I'd like to start at my far left: Mr. Patrick Ledgerwood. Pat is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta. He has served on a federal redistribution commission. He's had years of experience in the provincial office as our Chief Electoral Officer, and we feel very pleased to have his expertise on board.

Next to Pat we have Pam Barrett. Pam is the House leader for the New Democratic Party in Edmonton, and she represents the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands. Seated next to Pam is Pat Black. Pat is a Progressive Conservative member who represents the constituency of Calgary-Foothills. Skipping down to the other end of the table: Mike Cardinal. Mike represents the constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche in the Assembly, and he's a Progressive Conservative. Tom Sigurdson is a New Democratic member of the Assembly. He represents Edmonton-Belmont. Squeezed in between Tom and I - and I've got his attention . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: A rose between two thorns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . we've got Frank Bruseker. Frank represents the constituency of Calgary-North West. And I'm Bob Bogle from Taber-Warner.

We've made a practice of involving the MLA from the constituency hosting us - we had Jack Ady sitting with us this afternoon and participating while we were in Cardston - and we're so pleased today to have the Hon. John Gogo, our Minister of Advanced Education and the MLA for Lethbridge-

West.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are the committee looking at the question of electoral boundaries in the province. Moving on then, we're going to give you a brief presentation of the background. Before doing that, I wanted to give you a little bit of oral background to the situation.

By Alberta statute we are required to redistribute our boundaries after every second general election. We had our last redistribution in 1983-84. We've had general elections in 1986 and again in 1989. Therefore, if all things had been equal, we would have struck an Electoral Boundaries Commission this past year, and the commission would be doing its work at this very moment. But because of a court case in British Columbia and the ramifications of that case, the three political parties represented in the Alberta Legislature decided that prior to striking a commission, we needed to have a group of MLAs examine certain factors in Alberta, look at the court case in British Columbia and the implications of the Charter of Rights, and also look at neighbouring provinces that have dealt with the question of redistribution to see how they've handled them. That's why the committee was struck.

So our mandate is to hold hearings across the province, do those other things I've mentioned, and bring back recommendations to the Assembly. Hopefully, if it's a unanimous set of recommendations, they can be dealt with very quickly. If it's not unanimous, well then, it may take a bit longer. But in any event, the recommendations would hopefully become the foundation and the parameters within which our commission would be struck and the rules which it would follow in terms of redistribution in Alberta.

I'm now going to ask Frank to lead us through the slides. Once we've completed that part of the process, we'll see if there are any questions on procedure, and then we'll go right into our briefs. Before I do, can everyone hear? Okay. If at any time our voices drop, someone at the back please give us a signal.

MR. BRUSEKER: The first portion of slides we're going to go through is basically the same as what you have in the package you maybe received in the mail or picked up at the door. This first slide that you see before you simply lists all of the 83 constituencies in alphabetical order. The number to the right of the name is the number of eligible electors, and this was based upon the last enumeration which occurred prior to the last general election.

This next slide is again the 83 constituencies, this time not in alphabetical order but in terms of numerical order from the largest, which is Edmonton-Whitemud, down to the smallest, which is the constituency of Cardston. Now, there is a number 1 beside Cardston, and there is a little bit of an anomaly there in that there are 1,800 members, more or less, on the Blood Indian Reserve who chose not to be enumerated the last time around. So that figure of 8,100 is perhaps somewhat artificially low.

If you added up all of those numbers together, you would get a total of approximately 1.5 million. Currently there are 83 constituencies around the province of Alberta, so taking the 1.5 million and dividing by 83, you get an average figure of 18,600 electors per constituency. Now, if we apply the 25 percent rule that Mr. Bogle referred to earlier on from the British Columbia case, it allows for an upper end of approximately 23,300 and a lower end just over the 14,000 mark. So all constituencies should then fall within the range of 14,000 to 23,000.

This is basically the same list you saw before except now you'll

see that there are some constituencies which have been highlighted. Those constituencies which are in green are in all cases urban, and in all cases they are over the 23,000; in other words, they are more than 25 percent above the average. Those constituencies which are in pink are all rural, and they are all below by more than 25 percent.

Showing the pink constituencies, if you will, graphically on a map of Alberta, you can see the distribution. There are a couple of green spots in there, one of them being the city of St. Albert, which is located just to the north and west of the city of Edmonton, and also Medicine Hat. Then there are a few constituencies within both Edmonton and Calgary.

This is a map showing the constituencies within the city of Calgary. Again those which are coloured in green have more than 23,000 electors and are more than 25 percent away from the average. The same thing again – this is the city of Edmonton. I just want to point out to you that on both of these there is quite a similarity in that it's the growing areas of the cities – in other words, those that are around the periphery – that tend to be the ones that are large and growing larger.

This is currently the city of Lethbridge, Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East: two constituencies not coloured in, indicating that they are currently within the 25 percent variation.

This one is the city of Medicine Hat: currently the fourth largest constituency in the province – populationwise, that is – and again being over the 23,000 constituents mark.

This is the city of Red Deer and also the county of Red Deer. Red Deer is a bit of an anomaly. At the last redistribution Red Deer was too large to be one constituency, but Red Deer city was too small to be two. The brown line which you see is actually the boundary of Red Deer city, and that brown line unfortunately did not get shown on the maps in the package you have. The outer black line which you see is actually Red Deer county. So Red Deer was split into Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South and incorporated a piece of the Red Deer county as well to bring the populations of those two constituencies up to a sufficient level to justify two new constituencies where one had been before.

This is the city of St. Albert, again coloured in green, again being very large in size and numbers.

This one is similar again to one that you have in your package. There are some constituencies here coloured in purple. Those constituencies are more than 35 percent away from the average of 18,000. In terms of numbers it means they have less than 12,000 electors.

You'll notice there are five that are coloured in yellow at the bottom of this particular slide. These are more than 50 percent away from the mean, or less than 10,000 electors in each of those five constituencies.

The blue dots are where we are going or have been already – this committee that is traveling around the province or on a traveling road show – and we're getting stronger and stronger representation every time we go out.

This is a list of the hearings, and we've had to add a couple down on the bottom. Donnelly has been added on. You'll notice the Peace River country was the first area we went into. We didn't have a strong turnout, but as time has gone along and more people have become aware of what is happening and expressing a concern, it has been requested, and we are going to comply. We are going to go back to the Peace River country, and this time we're going to go into a little town called Donnelly. The same thing in Edmonton, and in fact we have a couple more that need to be added on. We're going back to Red Deer

and back to Hanna. We're also going into Wainwright, because we're having a strong demand for a chance for input there.

This particular slide combines two you have already seen. The purple again indicates those that are quite small, less than 35 percent. They are, in terms of voter numbers, less than 12,000. The green dots show where we are going around the province, and you can see that what we've tried to do is go into those areas in particular that are most likely to be affected by any redistribution that might occur.

Now, this is not on your package of information. During the course of our hearings process, one of the concepts which came up, that we discovered in some of the other provinces in fact, is that electoral boundaries have been created in other provinces using total census population as opposed to electors. The difference would be that the census would include all of those people who are residents but are non-Canadians – so landed immigrants – and it also includes all of those people who are less than 18 years of age and who are not yet voting age. So the numbers you will see are substantially larger. But what it does is: if you take the total population of the province of Alberta, you come up with just shy of 2.4 million people; dividing that by 83 constituencies again, you get an average figure of about 28,500 population now; if you apply a 25 percent variation around 28,000, you get a high of about 35,000 and a low of about 21,000.

This list is similar but somewhat different from the last one you saw. These numbers again are based on total census. The reason why we've done this, in fact, is that when you look at the ones that are coloured green on the first list you saw, there were 19 constituencies in the green zone; now there are only 18. In the pink zone, if you will, on the first slide there were 24; now there are 22. So by using total population, it appears that we can narrow the number of constituencies that perhaps need to be adjusted in terms of their boundaries.

Looking at a map of Alberta now again, looking at those constituencies which are outside the 25 percent variation, this time again using population, you'll see there are some that are pink again, which are below the 25 percent, but interestingly there are two rural constituencies which are larger than the 25 percent; in other words, more than 35,000 in population. On the first slide there were no rural constituencies that, in fact, were over the 25 percent. So it changes things rather significantly.

This is the city of Calgary again. If you look at the map you have in your package and look at this one at the same time, the one in your package deals with electors. This one deals with total census population. There are a few here now which we have picked up which, in other words, have been added to the over 25 list, but in fact there has been a net decrease, and we have fewer constituencies that are over the 25. So there's a bit of a change here.

The same thing applies again with the city of Edmonton. Notice again that still basically, though, it is that area around the periphery of the city.

This one is a substantial impact again; there's a big change here. The purple colour again indicates a change where we have those constituencies that are 35 percent or more away from the mean. The mean in this case was 28,000 voters. On the first slide we showed you that had purple colouration, using electors we had 16 constituencies. Now we've dropped that down to 12. So the indication seems to be that using census, there are fewer that need to be changed dramatically.

Here again quite a change. The last time we showed you ones that were coloured yellow – there were five – indicating that

they were more than 50 percent away from the mean. We've dropped from five down to one, and that constituency is Pincher Creek-Crowsnest in the southwest corner of the province.

These are the numbers of people attending and the number of submissions we have had. The number 64 there is written submissions. That's not numbers of people who have come to present to us but people who have mailed us a letter or have given it to one of the committee members and presented it. You can see the attendance has been growing dramatically as time goes along.

That's the last slide, so at this point we'll stop. I'll turn it back to Mr. Bogle, and we'll ask if there are any questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions for Frank on the excellent overview he's given? Okay.

Just before I turn to Bob to bring forward the first six presenters, has everyone who intends to give a brief tonight registered at the table by the door? If there's anyone who intends to give a brief and they've not yet registered, would they please now do so? We don't want to lose anyone in this process.

Okay, Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: Okay. Would the following six people please come up to the table to the microphone: Mrs. Alice Kooy, Bob Lien, Don Ferguson, Myles Bourke, Tom Erdman, and Rollof Heinen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rollof, we're going to start with you. Again, the process is very simple and straightforward: Rollof will give his brief, we'll take any questions or comments from the committee members, any questions or comments from the floor, and then move on to Alice and so on down the line.

Rollof.

MR. HEINEN: Mr. Chairman and members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries: good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I thank you for this opportunity to present this paper on behalf of the council of the county of Lethbridge No. 26 and the rural ratepayers within its boundaries.

The county's first observation would be that as long as the human race as we know it today has been on this earth, there has been a constant struggle relating to boundaries and areas of responsibility for individuals and groups of people, in that the basis for these disputes has been centred around politics, religion, money, and political influence. In Canada today provinces have recently been involved in disputes with the federal government over natural resources and the responsibility for taxation of its citizens.

The county of Lethbridge is of the opinion that regional disputes - be they rural versus urban, local versus provincial, provincial versus federal - are a fact of life in Canada, and as fair-minded people we accept these disruptions as a method of peacefully dealing with the difference of opinions amongst individuals and groups of people. However, one of the underlying factors in our peaceful method of settling disputes is our belief that all persons have equal opportunity to present their position to the level of government involved, in the belief that their point of view will be debated and a decision will be made which benefits the community as a whole. I therefore wish to express our appreciation of this opportunity to present our local concerns to you.

The first concern the council wishes to present is the matter of geographical size. Currently the county of Lethbridge is

represented by MLAs from the constituencies of Taber-Warner, Macleod, and Little Bow, and the combined populations of these provincial constituencies is 15,535 people, with a total square mileage of 8,206. In the county's opinion the three MLAs in the above-noted constituencies are extremely busy people, and this assumption is based on the time commitment we as county councillors live each and every day in order to represent the 8,266 people living in the county of Lethbridge. Ultimately our concern is that when you have a large geographical area that is sparsely populated, effective representation cannot be achieved, due to the traveling time required to be in all the communities that are involved.

Secondly, the county council realizes that the issues of and implications of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms were integral in the decision of the B.C. Supreme Court. However, it is the county's opinion that not all legal decisions are administratively practical.

Thirdly, the council wishes to raise the issue of regional representation. We wish to note at this time that the province of Alberta is presently supporting the elected Senate proposal, and our Premier is presently requesting the federal government to recognize a Senate nominee from Alberta who was elected by the people of Alberta. As we are all aware, in the federal scheme of things the province of Alberta is a minority voice, and indeed western Canada is a minority voice when one looks at the federal politics. Therefore, we feel that the provincial government of our province must have some empathy and must strive for some equity in representation between rural and urban, or else risk the loss of rural support in the provincial endeavours for equity.

The final item council wishes to present at this time is directly related to agriculture. Over the history of the county of Lethbridge, the county council has worked hand in hand with various departments of the provincial government in making decisions that will improve transportation networks, water drainage systems, and a milieu of other municipal needs that the people in a rural area require in order to contribute to the overall benefit of the province. The council has been told on several occasions that in order to access the various funds required to undertake the construction of these very expensive projects, we need the support and input of rural MLAs in Edmonton to represent agriculture at the table. In the council's opinion, if more urban constituencies are to be created or small sparsely populated rural constituencies are to be amalgamated, agriculture and the agricultural community will suffer over the long term.

Mr. Chairman, if the province is to accept the B.C. decision as it is, will there be a rural voice in the cabinet that can support construction of dams for water conservation and use? Will there be a strong voice in the cabinet when environmental issues require the restriction of the use of herbicides and pesticides to grow crops? Will there be a strong voice in the cabinet to protect rural interests when urban annexation proposals threaten to cover good agricultural land in blacktop?

Inequities in regards to representation according to population are as old as the human race. It is also very evident in all aspects of life; as examples, if we look at the federal level, the urban MPs versus the territorial MPs, or on the local level from one municipal jurisdiction to another - and the list could go on.

To the members of the committee, my advice would be to leave things as they are. Remember: if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Rollof.

Questions from members of the committee? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Rollof, thank you very much for your presentation. I want you to turn to the second page, the first paragraph, the last sentence:

Ultimately our concern is that when you have a large geographical area that is sparsely populated, effective representation cannot be achieved, due to the traveling time required to be in all the communities that are involved.

If you have a constituency – let's pick Cypress-Redcliff in the most extreme corner of the province; it has a population of 8,935. And then let's take the other extreme, the second largest constituency, Calgary-Fish Creek, which has 30,831 constituents. While it's true that one wouldn't have to travel a great distance in Calgary-Fish Creek to go from one end to the other, do you not see some equity in that with the numbers being 3 to 1 at least, two constituents may have to wait while another constituent is being served? Maybe that would nullify the traveling argument.

MR. HEINEN: It would probably weigh off one against the other, and that's why in my brief I do point out we have the same end; you know, one rural municipality versus another.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Okay. Thanks very much. Alice.

MRS. KOOY: I will speak strictly on behalf of my husband, Albert Kooy, who is unable to be here at this time, and on behalf of the Lethbridge hospital board of trustees.

Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries.
Dear Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to bring our concerns before you in regard to possible boundary changes. We hope that those responsible may examine all aspects of representation to ensure that rural constituents and their vast areas may function in a desirable manner in the future.

As the regional aspects of hospitals become increasingly necessary, we also realize the importance of proper representation so that the health of all may be forthcoming. Humanity demands a special standard and representation when it comes to themselves, but when it comes to their environment and agricultural needs, we become totally oblivious.

Lethbridge Regional hospital board of trustees.

Our environmental health and welfare are at stake if we continue to diminish representation in our rural areas. We must realize that those parts of our world that cannot exercise franchise also have important needs. We speak of environmental protection, animal rights, and sustaining a healthy agriculture. Our government of the day also has pledged an extra effort to conserve rural Alberta, so would it not be conceivable to start with effective representation?

Our regional hospital's aspirations and goals are to maintain proper health for our region. In this regard we realize that a healthy environment also contributes to good health. May we suggest restraints in the boundary changes so that rural Alberta may not be forgotten? No area should be penalized because of its lack of human inhabitants to the extent that the new boundaries are suggesting. There are common interests, both rural and urban, and there are elements other than people that must be taken into consideration.

Thank you.
Albert Kooy,
Lethbridge Regional hospital

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Alice, for giving the brief on behalf of Albert.

We move on, then, to Myles.

MR. BOURKE: Thanks. My presentation is on behalf of the Lethbridge-West PC Association.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, in a democracy the one-person, one-vote principle is necessary if each individual is to maintain an effective voice in government. As has been shown, there is a large variance in numbers of voters in different ridings throughout Alberta. Rural ridings for the most part have fewer voters than the large urban ridings. Without increasing the number of seats in the Legislature, a redistribution would solve this numbers problem but would also create very large rural ridings. This then poses the question as to whether those people in the large rural ridings would have effective representation. Can an MLA representing a large rural riding cover his territory, get to know the people, their problems and needs, and still have time to prepare for the sittings and take an active role in the Legislature? Consider the time issues for a rural MLA versus an urban MLA: travel time within a large constituency, made worse in many cases due to lack of direct road access; time required to deal with the needs of a larger number of municipal organizations, each with its own community groups and community boards; time needed to service the needs of constituents who feel their MLA should be their primary government contact as opposed to a faceless voice in a big-city government office.

So let me repeat the question: can an MLA representing a large rural riding cover his territory, get to know the people, their problems and needs, and still have time to prepare for the sittings and take an active role in the Legislature?

Lethbridge-West does not feel rural Albertans would best be served by the creation of large rural ridings. The problems created by a shifting population in Alberta are complex and cannot be solved simply by combining rural ridings. It is due to these complexities that we are not suggesting a specific number of voters for a riding. We believe we should maintain the status quo in the short term, and a long-term solution to redistribution which deals with more than numbers of voters must be formulated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Myles.
Yes, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Myles, my question to you is: do you feel there should be a formula or a mean for rural ridings and another mean for urban ridings, keeping in mind the differences you saw on the board of 31,000 in Edmonton-Whitemud and 8,000 people in Cardston?

MR. BOURKE: Well, we don't believe you can boil it down to just either numbers of voters or numbers of persons in a riding. There are factors such as the ones I mentioned, and those time considerations for an MLA would vary, depending upon which riding you're looking at. If you could identify all the key factors as a consequence of your hearings and then give appropriate weighting to those in some overall formula, perhaps that would tend closer to the overall answer.

MRS. BLACK: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yes. You make the case that travel time is fairly exacting on a rural MLA, and no one would question that. But when you look at this map, what you'll see is that the rural ridings vary in size; some are literally 10 times the size of others geographically and sometimes double the population. I wonder, would you do nothing to redress this imbalance?

MR. BOURKE: It's probably fairer to state that we're making simply a general observation about the rural ridings. That there may be some redefinition of boundaries would be well understood, but the general observation we have about the travel time problem is we nevertheless . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Myles, you're talking numbers. Primarily it's maintaining the number of seats, with some adjustments.

MR. BOURKE: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.
Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In your last paragraph you say that you believe we ought to "maintain the status quo in the short term." I suppose I have two questions. Given we've got a court decision that comes out of British Columbia that affects how we operate - or at least we're operating on the premise that that decision is going to affect us - given we have a court decision that is telling us how we're going to have to govern ourselves perhaps, I'm wondering how long you think "short term" might be. That's why this committee was struck. Do you have a time line where you think we ought to try and address the problem?

MR. BOURKE: It may well be that as a consequence of the hearings you will have gathered enough information to come up with the changed formulas, and on that basis the short term could well be just a matter of months.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

The second question I suppose I have is that currently, you know, all of us are very much aware of the fact that we have rural depopulation taking place not only in our province and in our country; throughout the world agricultural communities are becoming smaller in terms of their number. In Alberta the split is approximately 60-40 urban/rural. I'm wondering if you've got a point on that scale where you would start making changes to the number of rural representation in the Legislative Assembly. Currently we have approximately 50-50 urban/rural, with 60-40 urban/rural in terms of total population. At what point do you think we ought to be looking at making changes?

MR. BOURKE: Our group didn't come up with any numbers in that regard.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Myles, one other question. We've heard an awful lot about the ruling that came out of B.C. that established a 25 percent variance. That was a ruling for British Columbia. I guess my question is: do you feel we in Alberta should put as much emphasis on that ruling as we determine what our

boundaries should be?

MR. BOURKE: By no means, in that again when we go beyond the numbers of voters and numbers of people in a riding and look at a lot of the other issues, we don't feel you can really look at that particular percentage.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Anyone else with a question or comment? Yes, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think we're having difficulty hearing this, and I was wondering if the gentleman over there with the earphones has enough for all of us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, they don't. Unfortunately the microphones on the table are for *Hansard*. The recording equipment: we've got one microphone at the table. Those of us who are facing you are trying to project our voices out.

MR. PRITCHARD: We've got two mikes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have two. Pardon me. Well, let's try to utilize them.

All right. We'll move on to the next then. Bob.

MR. LIEN: Mr. Chairman, Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, this submission is being presented on behalf of the Lethbridge-East Progressive Conservative Association. At the root of the review of the appropriateness of the electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta is the democratic principle of representation by population. As a basic principle it is clear that strict population equality between constituencies would constitute equal representation in the Legislature. Example: each MLA would speak on behalf of the same number of constituents. However, would such a division be fair and equitable? Our submission is that it would not.

There are numerous factors to be considered which would suggest that strict population equality between constituencies is not necessarily fair and equitable. Examples are geographic differences, demographic differences, historical differences, and urban/rural differences. Application of the population-base standard has produced a wide variety of shapes and sizes of constituencies. Given the current rural population - and the trend appears to be toward a shrinking rural population - a more strict adherence to the population standard would result in fewer rural constituencies or, alternatively, in an unmanageable and unwarranted increase in the number of urban constituencies. As a result, a rural MLA would necessarily have greater territory to represent. We are concerned that such action may result in less than adequate representation of the interests of the rural constituents.

It is suggested that there are some fundamental differences in the tasks of representing an urban constituency as compared to representing a rural constituency. Briefly stated are some of the factors uniquely affecting a rural constituency. Constituency size and travel requirements: the sheer size of a constituency and travel limitations may make it difficult to maintain contact or attend various functions as requested by constituents. Municipal councils within constituencies: rural MLAs are required to liaise with councils of villages, towns, municipal districts, and counties. Hospital boards: rural MLAs may have several within a given constituency. There are school boards, irrigation district councils, planning commissions, tourist associations, recreation

boards, service clubs in each municipality, chambers of commerce in each municipality, Indian reservations, band councils. Clearly, while urban MLAs have many interests to represent within their constituencies, the foregoing considerations are, in some means at least, peculiar to the rural setting and impose additional time requirements on the rural MLA. An MLA has only so much time to give, and if the demands of his constituency outstrip his available time, the inevitable result is less adequate representation of his constituents.

In addition, the road system in rural areas inevitably involves the MLA in considerable effort to represent constituents in issues of construction, maintenance, paving, and the allocation of funds in these areas. Similarly, in those areas where irrigation works exist, many of the same considerations apply. The rural MLA is perceived by his constituents to be at the helm of each and every government service provided in that constituency.

It is certainly not our intention to minimize the demands of representation placed on our urban MLAs. We recognize that those demands are great, but our purpose is to point out the distinct rural factors which we feel need to be taken into account in assessing the appropriate deviation from population standards in establishing electoral boundaries. Due to the size and diversity of rural populations, there is a great tendency for the interests of various communities within a constituency to be different and occasionally to be in conflict. The task of representing these interests is difficult, and the time required may justify limiting the size of a rural constituency notwithstanding that the number of voters represented may represent a substantial deviation from the provincial mean.

Historically the establishment of electoral boundaries in Alberta has represented an attempt to recognize the basically dual makeup of our population. Although the urban population is significantly higher than the rural population, the vast land area, the primary resources, and the agriculture based in rural areas have made the province sensitive to the need for representation of rural Albertans. The current provision for 42 urban and 41 rural constituencies is a valid attempt to balance those interests.

It is interesting to note that we in Alberta have vigorously promoted the notion of regional representation in the federal system since it relates to the Senate. Indeed, we have pressed for equal representation in the Senate, notwithstanding the fact that our population would not nearly justify such equal representation if population were the sole criteria for establishing entitlement to that representation. By the same token, we suggest that regional differences within our own province must be taken into account and may justify significant deviation from the strict population-based approach to the establishment of electoral boundaries.

Thank you.

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

MS BARRETT: Do you consider 25 percent variation in either direction from the mean average to be a strict regulation? Is that your association's interpretation of "strict"?

MR. LIEN: Well, I think you have to look both at the number of people, the 25 percent, and at the area. Your comment to Myles earlier about some areas being vastly bigger than other ones I think also has to be taken into consideration.

MS BARRETT: But when you use the word "strict" – and you used it twice in your submission – were you talking about, say, a zero percent variation as being strict and arguing for an expansion of that, or are we talking about the 25 percent and arguing for an expansion from that?

MR. LIEN: The 25 percent.

MS BARRETT: The latter. Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Anyone from the audience?
Okay, Tom, you're next.

MR. ERDMAN: Dear committee, if I'd known there were so many of you I would have brought my brief for each of you, but I didn't know there were going to be nine.

Okay. I'm talking on behalf of the proposed Keho irrigation district. On behalf of the proposed Keho irrigation district, I am submitting a brief to defend our present electoral boundary. The Keho irrigation district is in the constituency of Little Bow. Little Bow has taken the brunt of rural depopulation. We are starting to pull our own socks up and are organizing to bring industry to our area. The Keho irrigation district is just one example. We need help. The distances our MLA has to travel to represent his constituency are too great now. If our MLA had to travel twice the distance to twice the population, the MLA would not have enough quality time to give any organization. This in turn will reinforce the horrible slide of rural depopulation, which in turn will cause rural ghettos. This is not the future the members of the Keho irrigation district would like.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Tom.
Questions? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Again, I would just put the same question to you that I put earlier. Has your district or your committee looked at depopulation? Have you looked at a figure on a scale where you would start making some changes to increase the number of urban seats, more representing population, or would you always keep it at a 50-50 split?

MR. ERDMAN: No, we haven't thought of that. We live in rural Alberta. We see the ghetto coming. I see the ghetto every day in my small town. Last night we had a robbery, and obviously it was a drug robbery. In small towns it's happening every day. We're in the forefront, and we're fighting for our lives out there. We don't know 25 percent here or 10 percent there or 50-50 there. But I do know that if our constituency doubles, it's going to be harder than hell to get anything organized in it. There's no question about that. It's hard enough now.

Thank you.

MRS. BLACK: Tom, I'd like to ask you the same question I've asked before. Do you think there should be a two-tiered system for distributing boundaries, one for the rural and one for the urban?

MR. ERDMAN: Oh, I think it can't be that simple. I think each small rural constituency should be looked at to see where their problems lie and what is happening and then be assessed

on an individual basis.

MRS. BLACK: So you're looking more for a formula that takes into consideration many factors.

MR. ERDMAN: Yeah, but more on an individual basis. You can't say this for that. I mean, the lady - I think it was Ms Barrett - explained about the Fort McMurray riding, how big it is compared to what Little Bow is. I think Fort McMurray should be halved so the MLA can get around. That's the obvious solution.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

MR. SIGURDSON: Would you increase the number of MLAs? When you talk about halving, if you were given a choice of maintaining the geographical size of the constituencies over reducing the number of rural constituencies, would you increase the overall number of constituencies in the province?

MR. ERDMAN: That's a hard question. I haven't given any thought to that, so I can't really answer. I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?
All right. Don.

MR. FERGUSON: There is a copy of my report that's available.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my privilege to present this brief on behalf of the New Democratic Party in the constituency of Lethbridge-East. The report that you have starts off with the six recommendations we wish to present, and the rest of the report is broken up into six sections, each section corresponding to the corresponding recommendation. In other words, section 1 deals with recommendation 1 and so forth. So I will go through the report a section at a time, and as I begin each section, I will read the relevant recommendation. Some of the recommendations are self-explanatory; that is to say, their content does not require the remainder of the report to understand. Some of the recommendations require one to read the corresponding section.

The first recommendation, then, is that the number of electoral divisions in Alberta be reduced to 78. This relates to the general question of how many constituencies there should be. In a letter dated November 20, 1989, Mike Cooper, who is the president of the Alberta New Democrats, claimed that the Legislature should remain at its present size; that is to say, 83 MLAs and hence 83 constituencies. However, his accompanying rationale, "There are no compelling reasons for increasing the number of MLAs," is not at all convincing and ignores the obvious possibility of reducing the number of MLAs. For this letter's suggestion - that is to say, reduction - there is a very simple and compelling reason: it should reduce the cost of running the government.

Now, I've struggled with how to give some rough idea as to how much it might reduce the cost of running the government, and I haven't included the following in my report because perhaps it's not appropriate. It's based on an article that appeared in the *Calgary Herald* on Wednesday, August 30, 1989, wherein, and I quote, "In the provincial budget approved by MLAs for 1989-90, \$18,507,505 was allotted for support for the

legislative assembly." I'm not entirely sure what is meant by "for support for the legislative assembly," but if one does a little bit of arithmetic and takes the \$18 million-odd and divides it by 83 and then multiplies it by the five constituencies we are recommending be reduced, one comes up with approximately \$1.115 million, which is a tidy sum. Therefore, the idea of reducing the number of constituencies should not be rejected outright, but some sort of rationale should be sought which would explain why there should be a specific number of constituencies. The main, guiding principle behind the choice of a number of constituencies might be the ability of MLAs to take care of the needs of the electorate effectively and without unreasonable stress on the individual MLAs, or, as MLA Bob Bogle puts it in his letter, "the ability of Members of the Legislative Assembly to fully discharge their duties in their constituencies."

At this point we have no evidence to suggest that MLAs with ridings having as many as 30,000 eligible voters - and there are many such ridings, and I list five of them here having populations just above 29,000 up to Edmonton-Whitemud, which has a voter population of over 31,000 - are unable to look after their urban ridings properly. Certainly we have not been hearing the MLAs from these constituencies claim they have been unable to serve their constituents adequately because of the large number of voters in their ridings. Therefore, it might seem reasonable that the average population of eligible voters per constituency should be raised from the current 18,685 to a larger number, say 20,000, a modest increase. With 1,550,867 eligible voters, this would suggest, by a simple matter of division, that there be about 77.5 or - I've rounded this up - 78 constituencies in all, a reduction of five ridings. This reduction is also substantiated by the kind of representation found in other provinces.

I've listed now for you a sort of table. The leftmost column is entitled "Province," and it deals with the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. Beside the name of the province is the year from which the statistics are coming. For example, in British Columbia in 1986 there were 69 ridings in the province, the number of eligible voters was 1,770,000, and that gives by division an average electoral size of 25,652, and so on and so forth for Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. I have a second entry for British Columbia, because I understand that the British Columbia Legislature is considering raising the number of its electoral divisions to 75. But in calculating the corresponding average electoral size for the second entry there under B.C., I've used the same voter population, because I'm not aware as to what the current voter population in British Columbia is. So that figure, then, of 23,600 in the second line of that table should be low if anything.

In other words, compared to British Columbia and Ontario - and you might notice that in Ontario, for example, the average electoral size is over 47,000 - Alberta is currently overrepresented and to a significant degree. Even with the increase in the number of electoral divisions that is contemplated in British Columbia, the new electoral districts would have an MLA from British Columbia still carrying an additional 3,600 constituents at least compared with our recommendation 1, and currently British Columbia MLAs represent about 6,900 more constituents than do their counterparts in Alberta on the average. It is ludicrous to suggest that it requires 83 MLAs to take care of the business of government in Alberta when at the same time a mere 69 MLAs have been serving an even larger population in British Columbia. Even if B.C. increases its representation to 75, the discrepancy looms large. And for the benefit of the MLAs who are here tonight, I will not go into a discussion of

the efficiency or effectiveness of representation in British Columbia as compared with Alberta.

The second recommendation is the following: that legislation or rules of procedure be introduced which will ensure that MLAs from constituencies that are either rural or large in geographic size be allowed travel and accommodation allowances that are proportionately larger than those of MLAs representing urban or geographically smaller ridings. The reason for this recommendation relates to the kinds of arguments you've heard against reducing the number of constituencies in Alberta. I imagine you may have heard arguments such as the following two points that I list here. Point one, some rural ridings will have to increase in geographical size in order to accommodate the reduction, and the second point is that already MLAs for rural ridings are at a disadvantage as compared with their urban counterparts in respect of adequately serving their constituents. We do recognize the difficulties of distance and travel that face MLAs from constituencies which cover large areas – large in comparison to the small region encompassed by urban ridings – but the arguments above are misplaced and easily overcome if one recognizes that such reasoning should be the basis for insisting that rural MLAs receive greater funding for travel and accommodation. Therefore, we've responded to this reality with our recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3: that the number of urban ridings be dramatically increased along the lines suggested in section 3 of this brief. The point in question here is: how should one determine the number of urban versus the number of rural constituencies? Of the existing 83 constituencies, 42 have been classified as urban and the remaining 41 as rural as specified in MLA Bob Bogle's letter. These 42 constituencies appear to be accounted for as follows. I have listed here – I believe this is correct – 17 urban constituencies in Edmonton, 18 in Calgary, two in Lethbridge, and so on, including one in Sherwood Park and one in St. Albert, adding up to 42. On the basis of this, what we have, then, currently is that 50.6 of the ridings are urban and 49.4 of the ridings are rural. In other words, we essentially have a 50-50 split between urban and rural ridings. However, if you look at the number of eligible voters, given again in Mr. Bogle's letter, one finds the following, and I simply list it for you here: under Edmonton, of the 17 ridings the number of eligible voters there adds up to 386,577, and that constitutes 24.9 percent of all voters. I've done the same thing for Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Sherwood Park, and St. Albert. So the constituencies that are labeled urban constitute 62.9 or roughly 63 percent of the eligible voters in the province. This was the case at the last election.

If one now agrees with the claim – and this is a principle with which we do agree. I quote from Mike Cooper again: "The principle of equalizing the power of each vote should be adopted." One might conclude that the number of urban constituencies should be calculated as I've indicated in the next table. If you were going to retain the current 83 ridings, if you simply multiply that by the percentage, you end up with 52.2, which I've rounded to 52, urban ridings. If you suggest the recommendation we're making, that you reduce the number of ridings to 78, and use the same kind of arithmetic, you still end up with 49 urban ridings, which is considerably in excess of the current 42. In other words, however you cut it, there should be a dramatic increase in the number of urban ridings and a corresponding decrease in the number of rural ridings. Such an argument might also be construed as being consistent with the recent decision of the Supreme Court of British Columbia. In

fact, if the current imbalance between urban and rural ridings in Alberta is not addressed by this select special committee and subsequent legislation, then surely a court challenge is inevitable.

In order to correct such an urban versus rural imbalance, one might argue that the appropriate number of urban constituencies could be calculated by dividing the number of eligible voters in a particular area by the desired average size of the constituency. Since we have recommended a reduction in the number of electoral divisions, we approach this with two views that I've labeled here near the bottom of page 5, scene A and scene B. Scene A is where you simply retain the existing number of electoral boundaries so the average is the current one of 18,685, and scene B is where you reduce it to 78 constituencies and therefore the average population is 19,883, slightly under 20,000. If you take the number of eligible voters, which I have listed on page 4 on the table near the bottom there, and divide that by the corresponding average of 18,000, you end up with 20.69, which I've rounded off to 21, which would amount to an increase of four urban ridings in Edmonton. I've done the same thing for Calgary. In this case I've rounded down to 23, corresponding to an increase of five urban ridings in Calgary. The corresponding arithmetic for Lethbridge and Red Deer suggests to us that there be no changes in the number of ridings, that they remain at two. Medicine Hat is a conundrum, because the average comes out at 1.58, and so there you have some work cut out for you. We have no recommendation other than the suggested number of ridings should be either one or two, representing an increase of either zero or one, and that Sherwood Park and St. Albert remain as they are. The same arithmetic is done in a case where the average would be reduced by our recommendation 1, and I alluded to your leisure to look at those numbers if you're so interested.

I'd like to summarize our recommendation 3, then, that there be a substantial, dramatic increase in the number of urban ridings, by simply saying that while arithmetic cannot be allowed to be the final arbitrator in these subtle matters, the above observation should be difficult to ignore. That ends my discussion of recommendation 3.

Recommendation 4 reads as follows: that in accordance with recommendation 3, the number of rural constituencies be reduced by amalgamating existing ridings wherever such amalgamation would result in a new constituency whose voter population would be consistent with the desired average.

The discussion in this section is based on the assumption that there should be a reduction in the number of rural constituencies. In section 3 we've already commented on how the magnitude of such a decrease might be dealt with; namely, by increasing the number of urban ridings, which should occur mainly in Calgary and Edmonton, based on the data given above. Southern Alberta is marked with a large number of ridings with low voter populations and therefore becomes an obvious target for amalgamation. Amalgamation shall be interpreted here to mean the joining together of two currently distinct electoral divisions in order to form a single electoral division. This approach assumes that one would want to use the existing geographical lines of demarcation as much as possible.

As examples where this principle would work quite nicely, we note the following pairings, which would create electoral boundaries which are reasonable geographically and would also produce new electoral districts with voter populations in the vicinity of the average figure of 20,000 that we have recommended. The first example is the amalgamation of Cardston and Taber-Warner, resulting in a population of 21,775. The second

example is Cypress-Redcliff together with Bow Valley, ending up with a population of 20,421. And the last example is Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and Macleod, ending up with a population of 20,310.

We recognize that not all pairings that we have looked at work out as nicely as those recommended above. Nonetheless, we recommend to the committee the principle that we have outlined in recommendation 4.

Our recommendation 5, then, is the following . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. I hesitate to interrupt. Recommendations 5 and 6 fall outside of the mandate of our committee. I'm remiss; I should have mentioned at the very beginning that if anyone had specific changes to propose to the lines drawn between boundaries, we would receive the written material and pass it on to the commission when it's struck. Could I respectfully request that you just summarize recommendations 5 and 6 in one or two sentences, the intent of what you're recommending, and then we move on to your conclusion.

MR. FERGUSON: The essence of recommendation 5 is that the existing electoral division in urban Lethbridge, which currently consists of Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West, be struck and that the same geographical area be divided into a north/south division. I've outlined in the report how that division might work out and how the resulting voter population might work out, depending on how you split it, and some reasons as to why we think this would be a more natural division in terms of geography and in terms of future populations.

Recommendation 6 deals with the inequity in population which currently exists between Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West. The recommendation there is simply that by moving a few of the polls from Lethbridge-West into Lethbridge-East, if it's appropriate, this imbalance – it could easily take place, and the resulting electoral boundary would be no worse than it currently is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your co-operation.

MR. FERGUSON: The summary, then, is simply that we conclude with our support of the recommendations that you find at the beginning of this brief. We want to thank the special select committee for this opportunity to bring our concerns to your attention, and we also want to thank you for taking the trouble to travel extensively throughout Alberta in order to hear the views of the electorate on this important matter.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Don.
Pat, and then Frank.

MRS. BLACK: Don, I'm quite interested in your proposal, because I'm an urban MLA from Calgary. I was interested that you started off – and I thought it was wonderful – that it should reduce the cost of running government. That's a conservative statement, and I love to hear that, so I was quite excited about it. But, anyway, what I was interested in was that, you know, if you increase Calgary, either under 83 ridings or 78, you're adding five ridings in one case and four in the other. I'm wondering: we have six Members of Parliament from Calgary; do you not feel that possibly 22 MLAs from this same population is a little bit overdone?

MR. FERGUSON: Well, the answer to your question is basically in the principle that I think is on the bottom of page 4, and that is the notion that the principle of equalizing the power of each vote should be adopted. If you accept that, then I think the recommendations that we are making are logical consequences of that. If you do not accept that, then of course you have a different situation.

MRS. BLACK: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Don, I appreciate your presentation. I represent Calgary-North West, which is currently the third largest constituency – populationwise, that is – in the province. The question I have for you is regarding future changes. When I look back to the last redistribution, Calgary-North West had approximately 22,000. It has grown to almost 31,000 in the last five years. If we project five years down the road, if we leave it as it is, it would be near to 40,000. Should we, in establishing electoral boundaries, look at projected growth or even projected decline in the constituency and take that as a consideration for what we actually face when the next election rolls around?

MR. FERGUSON: Well, I've tried to do that in relation to recommendations 5 and 6 that I didn't deal with in much detail, particularly the north/south split as suggested relative to the urban Lethbridge area. One of the reasons that a north/south split may be advantageous there is that in the future we anticipate that growth will occur in what we now refer to as Lethbridge west. I don't mean the political Lethbridge-West; I mean the geographic Lethbridge west. So, yes, I think that if possible, you should look to what the future demographics will do. The only difficulty, of course, is that it's very difficult to project what will really happen. Surely you're going to be guessing most of the time.

The pattern that we've seen here in Lethbridge over the last five, six, seven years has been quite consistent; that is to say, the riding of Lethbridge-West has been increasing in population while the riding of Lethbridge-East has been decreasing.

MR. BRUSEKER: But you're suggesting that we should make our best guess, then, as it were?

MR. FERGUSON: Yes. If you feel that your best guess has some sort of rational basis, yes.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Don, I have a question I want to ask you on your recommendation to reduce rural ridings and, in turn, reduce rural representation. I'm from a rural riding in northern Alberta which covers approximately 28,700 square kilometres, with a population of around 14,000. I understand what these members are talking about when they're talking about regional disparities when it comes to political representation. In rural Alberta I know for a fact that our standard of living is considerably lower than what Albertans enjoy in the majority of the bigger urban centres like Calgary and Edmonton. We definitely have regional disparities in the province. We always argue that there are regional disparities that exist in the west and central

Canada, that central Canada has the majority of the power and western provinces have no say. If we go with major changes in Alberta in that direction, then we're creating exactly the same thing that we've been arguing about in Alberta in the past 10, 15 years.

Look at my riding, for an example, and the rural area where I am. Part of my constituency faces the highest rate per capita on welfare in Alberta, which means we have a problem in the schools, which means the policing cost is higher, and which means we have a lower assessment base than enjoyed by the major centres of Calgary and Edmonton. We have the highest unemployment, an average of 17 percent when the province is running at 7 percent, and pockets of areas at 80 and 90 percent unemployment. The geographic area is large. When you look at urban centres like Edmonton and Calgary and how they've managed to enjoy a high standard of living, they've managed to attract industries to set up around Edmonton and Calgary, which in turn attracts our rural population to the growth centres. But the resources these industries use are resources that come from rural Alberta; oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, and tourism come from rural Alberta.

The question I have for Don is that with all these disparities that exist in Alberta right now between rural and urban, would you suggest, then, that we make it still worse yet for the people out there in rural Alberta than it is now and have more representation in Edmonton, increase the standard of living in Edmonton and Calgary and let it be lower in rural Alberta? Or is that not what we're here for? To me, when I look at . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: You've asked your question, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Just one more. When I look at representation, I always think "equal and effective representation." Now, how you arrive at that - we shouldn't listen to judges to do that for us. That's what my question is.

MR. FERGUSON: Well, I'm glad you asked the question, because Athabasca-Lac La Biche is one of the ridings we have spent some time looking at. One of the recommendations we've made, Mr. Cardinal, was, for example, that Cardston and Taber-Warner might be amalgamated. If you were to look at the area that would result from such an amalgamation and compare it with Athabasca-Lac La Biche, I think you'll find that you still would have an area that would be greater to cover than the new MLA from this newly created riding. What I'm suggesting to you here today is that your task as an MLA from Athabasca-Lac La Biche is considerably in excess of that of Mr. Ady from Cardston, that you are at a distinct disadvantage to Mr. Ady. I believe the road situation up in Athabasca-Lac La Biche is quite different than it is down in Cardston. I've been over those roads in Cardston, and I only got almost stuck once. I daresay that in the northern part of Athabasca-Lac La Biche things are much more difficult. You probably have to travel by bush plane or dog teams or heaven knows what; you would know better than I. So the recommendations that we are making relative to the amalgamation of some of the rural constituencies, particularly here in southern Alberta where we know them better, I think would result in a new setup of constituencies that would be fairer to people like yourself and the constituents you represent.

I don't know how to deal with the more basic question you've addressed with respect to poverty and its existence in northern Alberta compared with the urban centres such as Edmonton and Calgary. That's a very basic question, and I'm not prepared to

answer it. I wonder if anyone else is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Don. We're going to take one question from the floor, if there is one, or comment. Yes? Go ahead.

MR. TSUKISHIMA: Thank you. I'd like to address a question to your recommendation 2 on increasing travel and accommodation allowances to MLAs in rural constituencies. Money, in this case, does not compensate for the increased time it would take in order for an MLA to cover these areas. Unless he has some method of adding an extra two hours to each day, or something, or having MLAs function on less sleep, I don't see how this is going to help the situation at all.

MR. FERGUSON: Well, if you would care to look at the map up here and compare the area that is required to be covered by someone from Dunvegan as opposed to my favourite example, Cardston, you'll find that there's a great difference. I would imagine that in some of these geographically large areas it would be a great advantage to the MLA if they could set up offices in more than one location, for example. If their allowances were increased to do this, they might be able to do it. I know that some MLAs here in Edmonton have constituency offices. In rural ridings I think it might be appropriate to have more than one constituency office when there are great distances to be covered. That way the constituents could come to the constituency office on those occasions if there was material that the MLA wanted to get to them as opposed to the MLA always having to go to the constituents. Another point relative to that is that a lot of the MLAs I'm sure these days are using more and more electronic communication: the telephone, the telex, and things like that. These are also effective ways of communicating with their constituents, and in that situation the rural MLA is at no disadvantage compared with the urban one.

MR. TSUKISHIMA: Could I respond to that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, could I suggest that you two fellows get together at the coffee break? I'm sorry, but we've already spent considerable time on this one brief.

All right. Thank you, Alice and gentlemen.
Bob, we're ready for the next six, please.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, may the rest of your briefs be brief, and the questions and answers also.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Agreed.

MR. PRITCHARD: The next six to present: Marvin Dahl, Jim Mountain and Jay Doolittle, Josephine Krokosh, Brad Pagnell, Don Green, and Joe Grant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Josephine, do you want to move down one, and I'll make you number one?

Jay, are you or Jim or both - who's giving this?

MR. DOOLITTLE: I'm only here to answer any questions. He'll be presenting it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jim's going to give it. All right.

Please help yourself to a coffee or juice if you'd like. We'll begin now with Josephine.

MS KROKOSH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and panel members. I'm making this presentation to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries on behalf of the Southern Alberta Regional Conference of the Alberta Hospital Association. I won't go through the entire presentation, but I do leave it for you for your perusal. The southern Alberta conference is one of eight regional conferences in Alberta. The Southern Alberta Regional Conference covers 25 hospitals in southern Alberta, and we have a listing of them.

If we go to the last page of the presentation, this presentation is being made on behalf of the hospitals which make up the Southern Alberta Regional Conference of the Alberta Hospital Association. Many of these hospitals are in rural areas, where it is felt that if the boundaries of the constituency are increased, constituents will be left in a position where it will be difficult for them to keep in close contact with these MLAs. Rural MLAs must associate themselves with a wide variety of municipal councils, school and hospital boards. If these areas are to be expanded, causing increased responsibility, MLAs would have difficulty providing adequate representation. For the continued well-being of rural Alberta a fair system of representation has to be maintained. Population alone cannot be the determining factor when we look at the unique demographic, economic, and geographical aspects of our rural areas, particularly in the field of health care. It is difficult for those in urban areas to visualize the concerns of the rural population with regard to problems that distances themselves present to the well-being of our constituencies.

I thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Josephine.

Any questions from the panel members? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the presentation that you made.

One of the concerns I've always had about government is that seemingly when people are elected to represent constituencies and they get into Edmonton or into Ottawa, whatever the problems are - bureaucrats, time travel - whatever the conditions are, they seem not to be able to return as often as they might wish. I've been pleased recently by the change in attitude, albeit minimal, of the federal government when they sent out two committees of the House of Commons to Calgary and Edmonton, one to hear submissions on the goods and services tax and the second on unemployment insurance; all-party committees attended in Alberta, which was almost unheard of. I'm wondering though; if the Alberta government were structured in such a way that all-party committees were struck to look at matters relating to agriculture, health care, education so that they could travel as an all-party committee such as we are, travel around the province to receive input from boards such as yourself so that you're not just solely relying on one or perhaps two MLAs that may cross over your boundaries, do you think that might be a more feasible way to have your representations known in Edmonton to all of the members of the Assembly, by having all-party committees travel?

MS KROKOSH: I feel it would be worth a try, because it is difficult to get our concerns relayed and it is often difficult to set up meetings with the necessary people. Our concerns are so varied, and therefore presentations by each particular board or each particular group are almost necessary because of the varieties and complexities of our programs in our various areas.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom, the other key factor with regard to hospitals - and we have a former chairman of a board sitting here and several others in the room - is that depending on where the hospital's at, if it's building either a completely new plant or a wing, the magnitude of the workload for the board and the MLA increases significantly vis-à-vis a hospital that's up and running. So it's really hard to generalize on hospitals, is it not?

MS KROKOSH: Yes, I would say so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions? From the audience? Okay, thanks very much.

Jim.

MR. MONTAIN: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, committee members, we have a brief to you that I'm presenting on behalf of Mayor Paul Primeau of the town of Taber. I have with me Councillor Jay Doolittle, who will answer any questions, if you have any.

We wish to bring to your attention some concerns relative to your committee's review of the electoral boundaries and, more specifically, as to how it may affect the riding of Taber-Warner. It is our understanding that the Taber-Warner riding has approximately 13,760 voters, which is definitely below the minimum you have struck. If this riding was changed to accommodate the proposed rule of ridings in the area of 14,014 to 23,356, it would appear that the Taber-Warner riding would disappear and be split with the other ridings in the area, and we would lose our important identity.

More specifically, as larger rural ridings are developed, MLAs would experience difficulty in adequately representing their constituents. Some MLAs already experience this, and therefore we feel it would be intensified. MLAs already deal with larger numbers of municipal councils, school boards, and community associations than their urban counterparts. Again this would be further intensified. Rural constituents have less access to government services than do their urban constituents; therefore, they rely on their MLAs for information and assistance when dealing with government matters.

We in Taber are concerned that any possible changes in the electoral boundaries would possibly decrease the number of rural ridings and the representation for rural Alberta in the Legislature. We therefore suggest that if a change is really needed, it take place in the urban areas and that the rural ridings remain as is.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Jim. Questions from the panel? Yes, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Are you therefore suggesting that we add MLAs in the urban areas? Is that your recommendation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jay will answer the questions as councillor.

MR. DOOLITTLE: We're not making any specific recommendations as to where MLAs should be added or if they should be at all. I understand the importance of the decision in B.C., as does the council in Taber. However, it's not broken; why are we fixing it?

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, with all due respect, I think there are some things that are broken, and I think Ms Barrett has talked about some of them. No offence, Bob, but if you look at the physical size, the geographic size, of Taber-Warner as compared to Rocky Mountain House, Whitecourt, Athabasca-Lac La Biche, it is smaller in number and smaller in area than some of the other rural constituencies. And as all of the representations we've heard from rural members indicate, the poor MLAs have so much work to do. So Bob here has just got nothing to do compared to the guy up in Rocky Mountain House, I'm assuming. That's why he's got time to come around here with the rest of us urban guys who have even less to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know about the guy in Rocky Mountain House, but I do know about the guy in Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: So I guess my question is that I see some inequities here; do you not see inequities?

MR. DOOLITTLE: There are some inequities in this system, as there probably are anywhere in Canada on the provincial level. However, to change it on the scale that is being proposed here I think is posterous.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One thing I've got to clarify, and Jay, the Taber brief makes reference to it. Unfortunately, while we were in Medicine Hat, one of the 16 briefs made a suggestion as to boundary splitting. A map appeared in a recently launched weekly paper in the area, and I think some people and some councils have become confused into believing this is what is being proposed. It certainly isn't. We have not sat down to talk about things like that. That was merely a recommendation by one brief, and we've heard about a hundred to date. For clarification.

Pat first and then Tom.

MRS. BLACK: I guess Jay or Jim. I've been looking at some numbers here, and poor old Taber-Warner and Cardston have been kind of taking it on the chin a little bit tonight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're used to that, aren't we, Jack?

MR. ADY: You bet.

MRS. BLACK: I guess I have to speak up. I'm one of those urban MLAs, as I've told you earlier tonight, and I was just looking at numbers. We've heard a lot about accessibility and MLAs being able to service their ridings. I'm looking at Calgary, and Calgary has, according to this, 539.7 square kilometres divided by 18 ridings, Frank. We service about 30 square kilometres in our respective ridings. And I'm looking at poor old Jack Ady; he's got 6,225 square kilometres to service. Now, I've got almost three times the population, but you've got over 200 times the square kilometres, Jack.

And poor old Bob over here; good heavens, you've got 5,956 square kilometres, and I have 30. So I can get from one end of my riding to the other, if the lights are working in my favour, in 20 minutes.

MR. GOGO: Walking?

MRS. BLACK: Not walking, no. I'm not that fast.

So I think there is a valid point in looking at distinguishing factors, and I think we have to be open to that, Frank. I had to bring that up, because I have to say, when I look at this, that little Edmonton has . . . Here's Edmonton; they have 17 MLAs in 700.96 square kilometres. Jack Ady has one for 6,225. So I think there is something there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Chairman, thank you. What I'd like to do is just point out that the reason for this exercise is because there was a decision that was handed down in British Columbia that's had some major consequences on how we as provincial politicians view electoral boundaries in our province. We saw the same consequences in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. They have adjusted their boundaries accordingly. What we want to do as a committee is make sure that whatever recommendations we give to the Legislature, if they're adopted by the Legislature, then are handed to a commission. We want to make sure it will stand up to a court challenge, because we don't want to go through an exercise of having X number of rural constituencies and X number of urban constituencies when we've already been advised that if there isn't some form of equitable representation, it's going to be challenged in a court of law. So whatever we do, we want to make sure it stands up to any challenge that may go before any courts.

Having said that, I do want to go back to what is apparently implied in the last part of your presentation, and that is that if there is a change needed, it ought to take place in the urban areas. I guess the question I have is: if we're to maintain the same size of geography for rural constituencies so you have accessibility and something that facilitates easier access than a larger constituency might, does that mean increasing the number of urban constituencies?

MR. DOOLITTLE: I'll have to defer this comment to Jim, as he was more instrumental in the preparation of this brief than I was, especially in the latter part.

MR. MONTAIN: Yes, that's what it does mean.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any further questions? Any from the audience? Okay. Thanks very much, Jay and Jim.
Joe, you're next.

MR. GRANT: Mr. Chairman and committee on electoral boundaries, first, the village of Coutts is not in favour of any loss of rural ridings in Alberta. Second, cities have related problems – social, economic, and recreational – while in large rural ridings many diverse and unique situations arise. The social, economic, geographical, and recreational issues vary from one small municipality to another, not to mention the large farming society. Third, large rural areas are hard for one man to cover due to travel distances and research time for the many, varied issues. Fourth, the urban legislative members who have never resided in a sparsely populated area do not have hands-on experience with the unique rural issues.

Fifth, the population is shifting from urban settings. The plus formula does not necessarily work today. Government has to take into consideration and change with the changing times but

not always cutting in the rural areas. For example, post office closures, school closures, government offices in large centres create hardships for the rural residents. We do not need to lose our rural voice as well.

Sixth, expanding the geographic area of the rural elected MLAs will lessen the effectiveness of their representation. The voice of the concerns of rural constituents is not adequately dealt with under the existing system. This does not reflect negatively on any rural MLA; rather, the vast expanses now covered by those elected officials seriously reduces the ability to give equal representation to all constituents. Any enlargement of rural boundaries will further reduce equal representation.

The last one, the seventh: in this province success and growth of urban centres are highly dependent on rural agricultural and gas-related industries. These two industries are the breadbasket for our province. Any reduction of rural MLAs will eventually have a negative impact on our urban growth; thus, the number of the rural MLAs must remain intact. Any increase in voter numbers to meet current regulations must come from urban centres rather than combining rural constituencies.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Joe. Questions or comments from committee members? Anyone else? Thanks again, Joe.

Marvin.

MR. DAHL: Mr. Chairman and hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the county of Warner, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to present our position on the electoral boundaries issue in the province of Alberta. In reviewing the matter of electoral boundaries and the possible impact any change may have on the county and our residents, we have given priority to several matters. During our presentation, we shall present these issues and expand on the same as we see necessary to establish our position.

Let us begin by stating that the county of Warner is opposed to any change to the existing electoral boundaries. Although we recognize the concerns of the urban electors of the province as presented by their representatives – that many of the urban divisions have more than double the number of electors than some of the rural divisions – we do not feel this factor alone can be used to determine the size of the division.

The Taber and Warner electoral divisions were established in 1912 in Alberta. As in the establishment of many of the divisions, the historical background of the area determined where the boundaries would be placed. If you look at the map of our division, you will note that the Oldman River forms the northern boundary, with the Canadian-U.S. boundary establishing the south limits. The boundaries are established as well by highways 36, 3, and 4, which divide the electoral division into distinct areas. Within these boundaries lie irrigated foothills, land highlighted by the Milk River and many small tributaries which contribute to our cherished irrigation system. The long-standing family farms passed from father to son lie nestled in these foothills to combine with the many urban municipalities, providing much needed service to the families.

As well as these factors, you must consider the unique circumstances of the division. The Taber-Warner division is the only one in the province of Alberta which has a 24-hour border crossing station. This is a vital link in the Canada-U.S. free trade arrangement, and as we continue to develop our relationship with the U.S., it will prove to be even more significant in the future of this area.

These factors determine how the division is established but form only one small part of the reason we request the committee to consider leaving our division as it now stands. The Taber-Warner division covers 1,900 square miles and has within its boundaries parts of two counties, one municipal district, three villages, three towns, two hamlets, six school districts, three hospital boards, and numerous other local authorities including irrigation districts, recreation districts, electrification districts, and foundations. This means that the member of the Legislature who represents this area must give consideration to over 30 elected boards or authorities when trying to provide services to his division.

The fact that the city of Lethbridge lies next to the boundaries of the division is a strong influence. With the service infrastructure of the city providing much of the needs of the rural population within the Taber-Warner division and also being part of the urban area calling for more representation, we must admit that the member who serves this division must be constantly aware of both the needs of the rural and the needs of the city elector, but this is not the end of the requirement of the rural MLA. Not only must they balance the city needs with rural needs but they must also act as mediator between the towns and villages and the county and municipal districts. The two latter elected bodies are attempting to retain the agricultural lands for the purpose for which they were intended, while the towns and villages seek to bring more and more land into their boundaries for residential, commercial, and industrial development.

It has been stated in earlier briefs presented to the committee that a city MLA may attend up to eight meetings in a day. We do not argue this but rather ask you to consider that the rural MLA may only attend two or three but will have to travel 60 miles from one meeting to another and then another 40 miles before he can reach home. Even allowing for perfect weather, you can see how two hours can be gone from a rural MLA's day before a meeting can even begin.

The rural MLA carries a further responsibility, which is linked to our earlier statement about the factors determining the establishment of a division. In many of the rural divisions the farms are handed down from father to son. The MLA must remember the heritage contained in that farm and must always attempt to retain such rich history in the province. Our province has prided itself in its programs to retain our historical resources but often forgets that one of the richest resources we have is our agricultural land.

To this point in our presentation we have addressed all the reasons why we feel the Taber-Warner division in particular, but in general all rural electoral divisions, should be retained in their present status. Every point we have noted in the Taber-Warner division is equally representative of the many other rural divisions in our province. We recognize the difficult task which your committee has undertaken but ask that before recommending that any changes take place in our present representation, you carefully consider all these facts.

If indeed the status quo is not possible, then the obvious question that must be answered is how to make changes. When faced with this task, we addressed our previous statements. The historical background of the area must be given a high priority in considerations. What historical patterns tie the area together? For example, in the position of Taber-Warner, consider the establishment of the highway system: highways 36, 3, and 4. They tie the area together because the people established over the years what direction the traffic flows would take. If all the traffic had flowed from east to west, then we would have been

tied to Medicine Hat, not Lethbridge and Taber. The traffic followed the old trading routes established by the supply and demand principle, which has long been recognized by the world as our guidepost to future development. Within a historical status we must look at the people who established the area. Religious and ethnic backgrounds tie the people together into a community which is home to all of us. Long-standing traditions given from father to son and from mother to daughter show in the everyday life of the electors of the division. We cannot ignore these when talking about change.

The economic ties are also well established and must be considered. We refer to the traffic flow established by the supply and demand factors, and these have led to strong economic bonds. If we look back to the distance factor mentioned earlier in this brief, we bring another detail to help in determining what, if any, changes should occur.

The sparsity factor must be given a high priority in any future changes. How can any person provide reasonable service if their area is so large that to travel from one end to the other will take half a day? An emergency must be dealt with swiftly, and having to drive four hours to get to the elector's home will not provide a reasonable service to that individual. The workload of the MLA must be considered carefully. Can an MLA provide equitable service to their electors if they are trying to balance 30 locally elected boards or authorities while still retaining some semblance of balance to the rest of the province? It is admitted that the rural MLA may only have half the number of electors to represent, but what about sparsity? In the Alberta government's own grant processes this factor is an essential part of the calculation process. As mentioned earlier, within the Taber-Warner division alone we have over 1,900 square miles of land. This is more than the two major cities in Alberta have when combined. Our rural MLA must travel over every type of road ever built in the province, at times going from pavement to gravel to summer-travel-only roads, which are difficult if the meeting is in the middle of the winter.

We are not trying to put a hero's laurels on all the rural MLAs, but we are trying to explain how you must view this situation when trying to consider change. Again we refer to an earlier proposal which tried to tie from Highway 4 to the Saskatchewan border into one division. Imagine trying to work out a meeting schedule when you have to travel over 200 kilometres from one end of your division to the other. A further factor which must be considered is that of the topography of the area. An area which sits in the foothills and is primarily irrigated dryland farming and ranching with access to water and rural water systems, such as Taber-Warner, is not compatible with strictly dryland ranching and farming. Although they share the agricultural base, the style and method do not compare and therefore needs are at odds.

Allow me to close with a short statement on the representation of the rural elector. As the economy and life-style change, more and more of our young people from the rural parts of Alberta are leaving their homes to seek employment in the cities and large towns. This exodus from the farms to the cities results in many small farms disappearing and being swallowed into large operations. Those residents left in the rural setting know all too well that they are outvoted at the time of elections and also know that the city residents need representation. However, it must be remembered that the rural Alberta farms are providing, and have for as many years as Alberta has existed, the bread and meat that adorn our meal tables. To suggest to these people that they should receive any less representation than they already

have will not be readily acceptable. Rural Alberta provides a future for the young people only if they truthfully feel they will receive as good a chance for employment, educational opportunities, and recreational activities as they do in the cities. I ask that this committee not take lightly the need to properly represent your rural electors. To allow only one item, that of numbers, to decide the manner in which you provide this representation is, in my opinion, wrong.

Thank you for this opportunity to express the views of the county of Warner and, I believe, those of many rural residents of Alberta. We trust any proposals which you bring forward to the Legislature will consider the views we have brought to you today. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Marvin.

Any questions of Marvin?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Marvin, I'm just wondering: if we change the boundaries of Taber-Warner, how is this going to affect the operating hours of the customs station at Coutts?

MR. DAHL: I don't think it necessarily will change the operating hours at Coutts. However, it might affect the representation our MLA has to give to people that move into the area, and we feel that with that port being there, the representation of the people will expand in that area as trade is increased.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I don't know if this is just going to end up being a comment, Mr. Chairman. If you feel that it is, you can cut me off, please.

I appreciate very much the statement that you make. I want to deal with your conclusion, and you talk about rural depopulation. You expressed it very well when you said that young people are "leaving their homes to seek employment in the cities and large towns" and the "small farms disappearing and being swallowed into large operations." I think what you've got when you see a balance of people leaving is that it creates problems in urban areas as well because there are more people who come in and they bring with them, you know, many agricultural concerns. They're concerned about rural depopulation, but they're also living in the urban centres and they need services as well that we as urban MLAs try and represent.

I don't know how we can get that balance across. I think what's happened is that many of the presentations are seeing it as a sort of we/they situation throughout Alberta, where it's rural combating urban, and I don't want this exercise to be seen as that, Mr. Chairman. I think what we're trying to do is get across the point that we're trying to represent Albertans as best we can, and in that there is the depopulation that's taking place in the rural part of our province, we're getting an increase in the urban population, and attendant with all of that is an increase in the number of problems.

So I'm not sure if I really have a question after having said all of that. But I guess what I'm saying, though, is that I don't want you to feel that if there is a change, rural needs are going to be ignored by urban members. We're very cognizant of the fact that there is a problem, but we're also cognizant of the fact that there's an increasing number of people who are bringing an increasing number of their concerns to us as well. I just wanted to relate that to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before Pat has her question, it really begs the comment, Tom, that maybe we have to do a better job as MLAs from all of the political parties in urging more development in rural Alberta to reverse the shift.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I have actually two very quick questions of Marvin. The first one is: do you feel that our distribution should be based on full population, as you saw in the slides earlier, or as it is now, on enumerated eligible voters?

MR. DAHL: Personally, I would think that it should be on full population as far as distribution is concerned. However, I don't think the total thing can be on a numbers game; there have to be other things considered.

MRS. BLACK: Okay. And that's my second question then. In your presentation I think you clearly stated some historical factors and traditions that were unique to the Taber division. Do you feel there should be a two-tiered system within the province, one that could be used to develop criteria for establishing boundaries in the rural setting and another that could be established for urban settings?

MR. DAHL: Well, I don't know how you would do that and balance it totally. However, I think you have to consider some of the facts that we've mentioned in here in balancing those things. That's a task that I haven't really addressed, but I hope you people can do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Marv.

Anyone else? Are there questions from the floor? Okay. We're going to take two more briefs and then we'll have a short, 10-minute coffee and juice break.

Don.

MR. GREEN: Thank you. I have not brought a prepared brief in that I felt there would be enough of those. Just to support what the last gentlemen have said, in the constituency of Macleod our MLA has to represent eight town councils, seven hamlets, six senior citizens' boards, four recreation boards, one municipal district, one county council, one forestry improvement district, regional planning commissions, two irrigation districts, three hospital boards, one health unit board, three agricultural societies, eight tourism action committees, eight economic development committees, two historical societies, one Indian band, one rural historical site, three chambers of commerce, six Hutterite colonies. We look after two provincial parks, two municipal parks, two airports, two dams, water diversion projects, et cetera. If we were to have representation by population, then Calgary would have to become a province, because you're much bigger than Nova Scotia. What we're trying to do is come up with a balance. The workload for a rural MLA is fantastic because of the distance covered and inaccessibility to most of his people.

The other thing that we haven't touched upon here tonight: if the city of Edmonton or Calgary's mayor happens to catch cold, you can be pretty sure the Premier of this province is going to have to sneeze. We have from the urban centres a very strong political force that isn't just based on the MLAs we have. The cities of Calgary and Edmonton have strengths that we in the rural communities can't even touch, and so they should have. I'm not taking that away.

I appreciated Mr. Cardinal's remarks in that his voice alone,

sitting in the Legislature – he is alone. He has to lobby for support, whereas from the urban centres there may be two or three of you representing the same hospital or two or three of you representing the same school board. I wouldn't want your job to try and solve the problem that we have, but if we take away any more rural MLAs, then we're going to have to start to hire executive assistants for the MLA. Take, for example, Fjordbotten in Macleod. He's also a minister. I don't attempt to contact him – I simply phone his executive assistant – because he works every weekend. He takes holidays, but he's in Picture Butte, Fort Macleod, Claresholm, Nanton, Stavely, Granum, and because of the rural makeup he doesn't just meet with the town council. He meets with the library board, or they're after him. He's got a list of probably 10 or 15 people or boards or groups that want to meet with him when he has time off. He doesn't have weekends. We try to leave him alone on Sundays.

I think it is a very difficult problem you have to solve, but I don't think we should lose sight of the fact of the power and influence the urban centres have on government. Take a look at your LRT systems, et cetera. Not only do you have your MLAs, but you have a mayor and council that carry a lot of strength. You know, in the town I come from, we've got a population of 3,500. We've got to raise a lot of hell just to talk to LeRoy, but if the city council of Calgary wanted to meet with the Premier of this province, you can bet your bottom dollar that he'll be there within about 10 days. So I think that from the urban centres you have the clout of your population. It would be nice to say that we could use fewer rural MLAs, but I don't know how they would cover the territory. I don't know who they would get to help them, because most city MLAs have never had the opportunity to really understand the problems of a rural constituency.

So I would like to say thank you for the opportunity. I'm glad I haven't got your job to solve the problem. Take a look at 40 percent if you have to, instead of 25 percent. I don't think political parties should be concerned about this because I don't feel it influences who's going to be the government by changing the constituencies. It's easy for politicians to think that will help them in the next election, but it doesn't. If they do a good job, they'll be there no matter what political party they belong to.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Don.

Questions? Go ahead, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Do you have this map in front of you?

MR. GREEN: A map?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah.

MR. GREEN: You bet. Which one?

MR. SIGURDSON: Just the one. Any map of Alberta will do. It doesn't really matter which one.

MR. GREEN: Okay.

MR. SIGURDSON: First off, I think I can speak for probably every MLA here and every MLA in the province and tell you that I don't think there are too many MLAs who have Saturdays off, and it's not too many who get Sundays off either. But we do try and take Sundays.

You talk about the number of people you've got on regional councils, hospital boards, and all the representatives the MLA has to deal with. I want to paint a picture for you before I ask you the question. In my constituency in the north end, which has one alderman, one mayor, I guess four school trustees because I've got two different wards, I've wished I had more, because when a problem occurs, I've got 24,000 constituents who like to phone me directly. They don't necessarily channel their calls to the hospital board when we don't have a hospital in northeast Edmonton. They don't channel their calls through an ambulance group. They don't channel their calls through their alderman sometimes. They go directly to the MLA. So sometimes I've wished that I could only deal with the representative of the hospital board or the ambulance authority or somebody else.

Now, having said that, when I take my message on behalf of my constituents and I'm concerned about a medical facility in the northeast end of my constituency, I happen to have 33,000 total residents who live in my constituency, or 22,000 voters. If you take any two constituencies in the south, you wouldn't total the number of voters that I have. But their representation in the Legislature: when it comes to a vote, they have two votes to my one without having the same total number of people. I'm wondering if you feel that's fair?

MR. GREEN: It isn't necessarily fair. We will never develop a system that is fair. That's why we have the difference we're trying to deal with here tonight. Why is Nova Scotia a province?

MR. SIGURDSON: One of the suggestions that's come out through a number of meetings has been that there be a weighted ballot in the Legislature so this would allow constituencies perhaps to stay the same size. If you've got a constituency that has 10,000 people and another constituency that has 25,000 people, perhaps in the Legislature there ought to be a weighted ballot. Would you want to comment on that?

MR. GREEN: I really don't know. I have to come back to saying that the best we're going to be able to do is going to be far, far from being perfect.

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, yes.

MR. GREEN: I think the point that I'm trying to make is that if you try and enlarge the rural constituencies, it will be almost impossible for an MLA to cover and do a proper job.

Now, we've got another problem that we have to look at, and that is the cost of government. I just have to get this one in: at a 30 percent increase in salaries, I don't know how many more MLAs we could afford. Otherwise, I'd just simply say why don't we add some more urban MLAs on and we'll go for it.

MR. SIGURDSON: We could have had 30 percent more MLAs maybe.

MR. GREEN: I don't think there is an easy answer. But if I had my druthers, I would say give us more representation from the urban centres and leave the rural constituencies approximately what they are now. They can have some adjustments, but it's because of the physical nature of the thing.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

MR. GREEN: But don't forget; don't lose sight of what I've said about the political clout Edmonton and Calgary have.

MR. SIGURDSON: No, I haven't.

MR. GREEN: For example, we could have a possibility: two ex-mayors running for the Premiership of this province. Just a probability; it's something to look at. So how do the rural people feel? Can we run a rural person for the Premier of this province? Is that fair?

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm not going to comment on that one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Okay, Brad.

MR. PAGNELL: My greetings to the Chair, members of the select committee, and all the interested participants. I am making an oral submission on behalf of the Lethbridge-West New Democrat Constituency Association. I am pleased to have the opportunity to express our concerns on this very important issue confronting our province right now.

This matter must be dealt with. The inequities which currently exist are dealing with the issue of representation, and the issue of representation strikes at the very heart of the democratic process. Our first recommendation is that constituencies must be of a relatively equal size, and we see the plus or minus 25 percent of the median as being a fair and equitable solution. The principle of one person, one vote is a fundamental principle for democracy to operate effectively. Under the current system, one vote in Cardston is worth three votes in Edmonton-Whitemud. This cannot be allowed to continue. If it does, it only sabotages the democratic process. By creating relatively equal-sized constituencies, we will ensure fair and equitable representation for all Albertans, rural and urban.

Our second submission involves that changes should not be made which would increase the number of MLAs above the current number of 83. Keeping a lid on government spending is obviously a priority for all the parties and for all Albertans, and we agree to a certain degree with Mr. Ferguson's submission about leaving open the option of possibly reducing the number of MLAs.

The issue of redistribution is something which must be done very soon, especially given the current turmoil within provincial politics and to ensure that such redistribution takes place before the next provincial election. We must ensure fair representation, because if we don't do it, the courts will do it for us, and I don't think that's something any of us want to live with.

I'd like to thank the committee for their time, and I appreciate this opportunity to express the opinions of the Lethbridge-West New Democrat Constituency Association.

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

MRS. BLACK: Brad, you talked about constituencies should be of equal size.

MR. PAGNELL: Relatively equal size.

MRS. BLACK: Relatively equal size. And you're talking strictly population? You're not looking at geographical distribution at all or the demographics within the geographic . . .

MR. PAGNELL: We're saying the primary principle should be on number of voters or population.

MRS. BLACK: And the secondary condition?

MR. PAGNELL: Should be serviceability, et cetera. I mean, we're not saying those shouldn't be criteria, but they shouldn't be the primary criteria.

MRS. BLACK: So you're saying there should be some form of balance between those, with population as the primary . . .

MR. PAGNELL: Yes.

MRS. BLACK: . . . and the other factors entering into some form of balancing feature.

MR. PAGNELL: Yes, within the plus or minus. I mean, it is important to maintain some sort of equity in terms of numbers, but there has to be some flexibility. We are very cognizant of that.

MRS. BLACK: My last question is: do you feel the distribution should be based on full population or enumerated eligible voters?

MR. PAGNELL: That's not really an issue we dealt with. The numbers we went with were the eligible voters numbers we were given in the package. Off the top of my head, I think we'd have to sit down and look at the specifics about what would be the implications of numbers of voters and numbers of actual population. We're not sure what it means. Like we're not sure what kind of impact this would have on redistribution.

MRS. BLACK: What do you think yourself?

MR. PAGNELL: Off the top of my head?

MRS. BLACK: Yes.

MR. PAGNELL: Oh boy. I think population, because I think it's important that even nonvoting individuals have to have their concerns represented by MLAs. Be they individuals under the age of 18, be they landed immigrants, et cetera, they have concerns too and they should be able to go to an MLA. So I think that in a way population would be more fair.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Brad.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? Yes, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I have just one quick question of Brad. Basically, Brad, you're saying if the situation is left the way it is now - for an example, we do have reasonably equal representation now between rural and urban . . .

MR. PAGNELL: No, I'm talking about . . .

MR. CARDINAL: . . . no doubt after the next election, for an example, there'd be court cases launched. Is that what you're saying?

MR. PAGNELL: I'm just saying that the possibility could exist,

and that's something we have to be aware of and the hon. committee members also have to be aware of. We should try to come up with some sort of solution that is agreeable to all Albertans and not something imposed by the courts.

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

I'd earlier suggested we'd have coffee. They're still bringing coffee and juice in, so I think . . . We've got four more briefs to go. Let's deal with the four; we'll do our summation and then have our break. Okay? I know you've been sitting a long time, but why have a break if there isn't enough coffee and juice for everyone?

So, Bob, the next four are . . .

MR. PRITCHARD: The next four are Edgar Anderson . . .

MR. GREEN: I'd just like to say one thing to the urban members of the committee. I appreciate the fact that you work very hard too. I have no illusions about that.

MR. PRITCHARD: . . . Cecil Wiest, Lawrence Cherneski, and Leonard Fast.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we're going to get back in and deal with the last five. There are six here, but . . . Are there four briefs?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There are four briefs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Four briefs. Lawrence, number one.

Could we take our seats, please? We're going to get through the last four briefs, and then we'll all be able to get up and stretch and informally visit with one another. Thank you.

Okay, Lawrence, go ahead.

MR. CHERNESKI: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my brief is on behalf of not a group but what I hope would be all Albertans.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe just identify who you are and where you're from, Lawrence.

MR. CHERNESKI: I'm Lawrence Cherneski. I'm from Taber.

The brief consists basically of: we start out with our goal, and that is to establish a formula encompassing factors in addition to population as a basis for representation. This goal must have validity of reason to be accepted by all Albertans. The arguments I'll be using, or the arguments I have, are the Canadian historic precedents of variance in sparsely populated areas, P.E.I., the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories; our current Senate proposal; rural areas that due to the nature of demographics need representation considerations in addition to population.

Since boundary formation consists of ideal standards and - if you look at the data chart on page 4 - is impossible, some other method must be devised, and that's what the committee is here for. This method must recognize the responsibility of an effective MLA representing people in various forums. This may limit his or her ability to represent in a focused manner an equal number of people where the size of constituency and governing bodies are above the norm. The factors that are proposed in this brief, or the factors to consider in defining boundaries, are: population, governing bodies, the area - that's the size of the

riding – and, number 4, other. As I put in brackets, you can make an environmental factor if the committee can see there is merit to it. I did not include it.

Then we go to . . . I'd like to put in some qualifications here. The data presented is not that of a statistician and therefore may not be complete. Its use is intended only for illustrative purposes. The demographics of a standard riding are not absolutes. Their use is for illustrative purposes also, to show how an adjusted population base is reached. Consideration of additional criteria encompassing factors in addition to those I used may be desirable. Following that is a formula. Possibly I won't go through it, but basically it gives a weight value to population and additional factors. If there are any questions, they will come up later.

To show how this would work, I have listed five sample ridings, and you can see that the population runs from 40,000 to a low of 6,000, with size values in there and, of course, governing bodies. Those were listed at random to show what would happen. Our results show in riding 1, with a population of 14,000, size 1,000 square miles, and 17 governing bodies, that they would receive an adjusted population base of 33,500.

For the public this will be difficult, of course; the committee members will have this sheet.

Basically ridings 2 and 3 also would fall into almost the same range, but they vary from a population of 14,000 to 10,000, in size from 25 square miles to 36 square miles, and governing bodies from seven to 17. Samples 5 and 6, of course, show that you do fall out of the norm in certain sizes.

I have notes to the above, and from page 2 it would appear that sample results 4 and 5 need boundary adjustments depending on the set allowable variances. Also, riding 4 may receive additional population credits. See other factors to consider, item 3, page 1. That refers to economic and environmental matters. You can have an area – and I can think of, for instance, Cypress here – that's in a brittle environment. If the committee and, of course, the people accept that this is important, they may want to give some weight to the environment in that area. Of course, it's listed that economics may come into it. If it's important to all of society in Alberta, they may wish to have that included in their weighted average.

Note 2. Again in the qualifications, these are not absolutes. It refers to governing bodies in a city to show how the formula does react. It would show the governing bodies in what is possibly a larger urban area in which we list seven governing bodies, and there may be 17 members. The number factor is left at seven rather than .41 in recognition of the larger population for a governing body in such an area. Again, we're trying to give extra weight to population.

Note 3. This is one we played with for a day or two. We tried all sorts of formulas to arrive at something that is equitable. However, the demographics in Alberta are so diverse that it is impossible to include all areas in one range that have relevant data. The final solution seems to provide the most equitable result. If I may just sort of stress this: if this were an economic model, we'd probably have at least three ranges of data to apply. What I attempted to do was to find some method we could use that would apply to the whole province rather than something we would use on a two-tiered or three-tiered system.

Page 4 is self-explanatory. I did not know what the number of electors was, so I used the approximate population of the province. To me that is a valid number to include in representation, because whether a person is 18 or less, they still require representation.

The rest, I think, are self-explanatory, except that the governing bodies I refer to include municipal and town or city councils, school boards, and hospital boards.

I'd like to close possibly on this, and this is from benefit of hindsight. There has been an allusion made to the principle of one man, one vote. I won't dispute that. But I don't think that is a principle that's practised in the world today and certainly hasn't been in Canada. I used examples earlier. For instance, when Canada was formed Prince Edward Island had a set representation, and the same with the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Neither of them would qualify. Then, too, if we want to go to the world situation, we have bodies such as the UN. This may be disputed, but basically we have countries with all variances of population and still they are a country with certain value and get one vote.

I don't know if the other part is a point for the committee, but I would like to see that whatever the committee comes up with is acceptable to all Albertans. However, if it is 99 percent, you can still have a court challenge made by one person. I would like to think that within our system the Legislature is the final arbitrator in such a matter rather than a court of law. I mean, you are the people who represent us and you are the people who make decisions on our behalf, so we'd like to think the Legislature will be the final arbitrator on this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Lawrence.

Any questions or comments from committee members? Others? Thanks again.

Ed.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Ed Anderson and I represent the town council of the town of Raymond. The Raymond town council together with numerous citizens of our community and constituency are most perplexed that the possibility of the current examination of Alberta's system of electoral boundaries could result in changes which would recognize representation based entirely on population. Any astute individual can readily recognize that this type of representation is not at all reasonable or equitable. Representation by population does not recognize the unique geographic, economic, demographic circumstances of rural areas. Consider the widespread inequity that pervades federal politics with the very clear population power of southern Ontario. This same type of electoral power situation will be evidenced within Alberta if electoral boundary changes are realigned with reference to population equality.

The Cardston constituency, in which we are situated, has a voter population of 8,105, well below the average. Our problems are distinctively different from those of urban constituencies. Any realignment would result in a mixture but most assuredly reduce the number of rural MLAs and, consequently, also our voice in government decisions. In fact, under such circumstances it is not difficult to recognize that the situation could quickly occur in which there would be no rural area representation, a condition which would be absolutely unacceptable. The different priorities, interests, and needs of rural areas will most likely be out of context to an urban-oriented MLA, as well as vice versa. Perhaps it is interesting to note that only two members of the committee are rural MLAs; the rest are from the urban ridings.

The concept of consolidating rural areas to attain a portion of populace may resolve the head-count problem. However, any judicious MLA, be they rural or urban, past or present, can and will attest to the illogical and irrational reality of that alternative.

The current constituency boundaries tax the MLA's time and ability to achieve efficiency and effectiveness without enlarging any of them. The Cardston constituency, for example, is approximately 130 kilometres in length and 60 kilometres in width. We are confident that your committee can well appreciate the copious distances of roads to be covered within such a geographical area, not to mention the fact that it is located six hours from Edmonton. There is a 12 hours per week travel commitment alone for the MLA. Strong home support is a prerequisite for an MLA's family, and they share their dad or mom for an extensive period of time. This would become an even greater sacrifice with larger electoral boundaries. The number of organizations within a constituency is a major factor that must be addressed. Again using our Cardston constituency as an example, there are three towns, three villages, their councils and chambers of commerce, six irrigation districts, three hospital boards, three school districts, and the myriad of special interest groups, organizations, clubs, and societies that abound therein. This is certainly unlike the cities, with their multiple MLAs and limited school/hospital factors and minimal travel time requirements.

In conclusion, we feel that during your review process, the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries should take the time and opportunity to reflect upon the primordial concept of grass-roots democracy; that is to say, government of the people, for the people, by the people. The citizenry gives government its legitimacy, and constituents are an integral part of the decision-making process. Democracy is not a mystical concept. It is a process by which the acts of governing are to be carried out in accordance with the wishes of the people. We submit that the existing electoral divisions maintain a far more acceptable, appropriate, and advantageous constituency system than other alternatives available, which would seriously jeopardize rural area representation and our voice in government decisions. We do not support the concept of larger rural areas or the inequities that will be created through a rural/urban constituency and its fiefdoms of contrasting priorities, interests, and pursuits.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Ed.
Questions or comments?

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Ed. I take it that you believe the party that receives the greatest number of votes should form a government.

MR. ANDERSON: The greatest number of seats.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm talking about the greatest number of votes.

MR. ANDERSON: It seems to me that in our present system there is more involved than just the number of votes. It's different areas, different types of geography that are available in the province.

MR. SIGURDSON: So if party A had 55 percent of the popular vote, you wouldn't necessarily believe it should form the government?

MR. ANDERSON: Unless it had a majority of the ridings, no.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Okay. Thanks very much.
Leonard.

MR. FAST: Mr. Chairman, hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Leonard Fast. I'm representing the Coaldale Health Care Centre; I'm the chairman of the board there. We have a brief to present. On behalf of the board of the Coaldale Community Hospital Association and the Coaldale Health Care Centre, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address this committee. We have had the opportunity to peruse the circular which was provided to us by your committee chairman, Mr. Bob Bogle, and discuss the realignment of the electoral boundaries. Although we recognize that a review of our provincial electoral boundaries is required, we have some concern as to the ultimate decisions that are taken and the manner in which these decisions will impact upon the rural constituencies.

Our hospital is located in the Taber-Warner constituency, represented by your chairman, Mr. Bob Bogle. Our constituency would appear to be classed as a rural constituency, with its 13,670 eligible voters. There may be a danger of it disappearing or having significantly different boundaries, which would also impact on neighbouring constituencies.

We believe that a realignment of our provincial electoral boundaries based solely on the number of eligible voters would be a grave mistake for a number of reasons. There are considerable differences between the so-called urban constituencies and the rural constituencies with respect to their interests, concerns, and aspirations, and an electoral boundary change based solely on eligible voters would emphasize this difference and lead to a marked swing of influence and power to the urban constituencies, the result being that the rural constituencies would have little influence and the concerns and aspirations of the constituencies would tend to be subordinated to those of the urban constituencies. Accordingly, there must be a fair and equitable ratio between urban and rural constituencies.

We must also recognize the vast size of any of the existing rural constituencies, especially in comparison with the urban constituencies. To increase the number of eligible voters in many rural constituencies would make the task of an MLA unmanageable. The MLA is expected to maintain regular contact with the constituencies, and should a rural constituency become too large in terms of area, there would be little or no opportunity or time for regular contact to be maintained, the result being an MLA who may not be in touch with the constituents. Consequently, how would the MLA represent and espouse the views of the constituency? We recognize that all too often the political party line becomes all important, but surely there is a time when the views of the constituents must be heard and represented. This can only be done when the MLA can regularly meet with the constituents.

Another consideration in keeping with the point just raised is that some urban MLAs at present have no school boards, hospital boards, and few elected officials to deal with, whereas the rural MLA invariably has a number of such boards and elected officials requiring attention and time. By increasing the size of rural constituencies and decreasing the size of the urban constituencies, this problem is exacerbated. We must remember that our MLAs are human, and although some people expect them to be all things to all people, this is not possible. They must be given an opportunity to juggle their career with their

private lives and arrive at a fair and equitable balance.

Our rural constituencies are faced with some unique problems, one of the most important being the declining rural population. This is a problem which impacts on the economies of the cities and towns in our province. By decreasing the number of MLAs representing the rural population, there's less effective representation for the rural population, these rural problems will not be properly addressed, and our rural population and rural emphasis will decline even more in favour of the urban population.

An electoral boundary change based solely on the number of eligible voters also presumes that an MLA with a more populous constituency cannot effectively represent his constituency. However, considering the foregoing points, the same presumption can also be made of the MLA with a less populous constituency. Accordingly, a happy medium must be achieved, and this cannot occur if radical changes are made to the current boundaries. Although we do not have any magic formulas to resolve the situation other than to argue for the status quo, careful thought must be given prior to making electoral boundary changes, and once change is agreed upon, time for implementation of the changes must be provided.

Thank you for consideration of this brief.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Leonard.
Questions or comments? Yes, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Leonard, I'm going to ask you the same question I've asked before. Do you feel that with the split we have right now of almost 50-50 - 50 percent urban and 50 percent rural representation - that represents the rural interests adequately within the Legislature?

MR. FAST: The urban population may say it overrepresents their interests; we may even say it underrepresents their interests. But I can see there is an inequity and there may be room for change. But a 50-50 ratio: no, I do not believe it is probably a fair ratio.

MRS. BLACK: Okay. What do you feel would be a fair ratio?

MR. FAST: I don't believe I'm really in a position to comment on that. I really think that is the job of this committee and ultimately the Legislature.

MRS. BLACK: Well, then, do you feel there should be factors identified that distinguish a rural riding from an urban riding and, based on those factors, two sets of parameters be established to determine boundaries between urban and rural?

MR. FAST: I think the ideal situation is if each constituency would have a number of so-called urban centres and also a rural population, but considering our province and the way the urban centres are situated throughout the province, that is not possible. I believe it is a very difficult task you are faced with. I don't have any answer. I just do not believe that by merely reducing the number of rural representatives and increasing the number of urban representatives you are necessarily solving the whole problem.

MRS. BLACK: The last question I want to ask you, Leonard, is: we saw on the screen at the very beginning a situation in Red Deer where they had combined urban and rural and created Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South. It's really the only place

in the province where there's a combined urban/rural mix. Do you feel that's a workable solution for some areas?

MR. FAST: As I indicated a few seconds ago, yes. I think that probably would be ideal situation.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Anyone else? Any others?
Okay, Cecil. We've saved the best for the last.

MR. WIEST: Mr. Chairman, Murray's going to give it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Murray's going to give . . . All right.

MR. BROWN: Mr. Chairman, hon. members, I'm giving this brief on behalf of the municipal district of Taber No. 14. We're in a kind of unique situation where we are, because we have three MLAs we have to do business with when we want to work with our provincial government.

The municipal district of Taber is very concerned about the effect of changing existing rural electoral boundaries and the effect it will have on rural population. Yes, representation by population is a popular phrase. We in western Canada and Alberta understand only too well its ramifications to us at the federal level. The Alberta government has strongly attacked and put forth alternatives to this system of representation. We know that because of the vastness of this land and because of the dense population in central Canada, there has to be an alternative to our present system for fair and equitable representation. Likewise, the province of Alberta has the same overall dilemma, with the cities in the province containing 66 percent of the population. If there were to be equal representation, they would by rights have 55 seats in the Legislature. This would leave rural Alberta with 28 seats and probably 99 percent of the land area to govern.

One other area which we feel needs to be addressed is the elector himself. Take the case of the B.C. elector who felt that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was being violated because the system in B.C. discriminated against urban voters by giving more seats to rural areas than was justified by population. Contrarily, in Alberta it is the rural elector who is discriminated against by having an MLA whose constituency is so large that he rarely sees his electorate. Often his home is in another community, and he can only be reached by long-distance telephone or, to visit him, one must travel 30, 40, or more miles. An urban MLA is accessible to an elector in his riding at all times when the Legislature is not in session. This does not apply to the rural elector.

We urge the committee to review this very carefully and to make sure all of Alberta receives fair and equitable representation. Thank you for allowing us to make this presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Murray.

Cecil, you're taking questions if there are any? Or is Murray or . . .

MR. WIEST: Yeah, I'll take them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Anyone else? Okay.
Thank you.
Yes, Ted.

MR. DeGROOT: Could I answer a question that was formerly asked by my neighbour to the right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead. Can everyone hear?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Use your mike, Ted.

MR. DeGROOT: I personally think it would be very fair if we could have somewhat similar amounts of rural MLAs and urban MLAs, and if you have to use a different formula to do that, somewhat the same as what the provincial government uses to disburse grants to MDs. They have something like equalized assessment, and maybe they can find a formula where they can work in the amount of roads, the amount of school boards and hospital boards to come to some kind of situation where we have a 50-50 split or thereabouts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Ted.

Cecil, you wanted to comment. Do you want to take the mike, please.

MR. WIEST: Murray mentioned at the start about his three MLAs: Little Bow and Bob Bogle and then Cypress-Redcliff. It's so big. We think it is - like Little Bow is. We've been trying to get Ray Speaker down to our MD meeting for three months now, and we can't seem to get it organized to get him down there. So I don't know what it'd be like if we were less represented. That's all I'd have to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Summations. Panel members, any final concluding comments?

MS BARRETT: No. You're good at summarizing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Okay.

I've jotted down some of the key elements that I think different presenters have tried to say to try to capture the essence of tonight, and I'd like to share it with you. It started off with a familiar theme, talking about the geographic area in a constituency and trying to give the flavour of what a rural riding is really like, and we went on to the need for regional representation. There was a suggestion that the status quo be maintained in the short term and that we find a solution in the long term. In other words, don't go to a radical shift transferring seats from rural to urban now, but in the longer term there must be a solution to the problem.

Fair and equitable representation was raised, as it has been on many previous occasions. A current 42 urban, 41 rural balance should be maintained - again, a familiar theme. As one presenter said, we are fighting for our lives in rural Alberta. He really meant the communities' lives.

We then heard a brief with a number of recommendations which called for a substantial increase in urban representation and a decrease in rural representation and an overall reduction in the total number of seats.

We then heard from a spokesman for southern Alberta hospitals, speaking of the unique role each member plays with their particular hospital.

There was a request not to change rural ridings, to leave them pretty well as they are. We need hands-on experience with unique local issues. Again, a recommendation as to working with a particular problem.

The historical and cultural background of the area was mentioned, and that's a familiar theme that seems to be coming out more and more as we go through the province.

The sparsity of population factor: again, a factor that keeps coming up, that some recognition should be given for those very sparsely populated areas.

One member spoke of urban voter power, the power of the urban votes primarily in the two large metropolitan centres. I think that's the first time we've heard it expressed quite that clearly and succinctly. The inequities must be addressed, but there must be relatively equal size in terms of ridings.

A formula for constituency boundaries was presented, with a suggestion that we look at population, area, and distance to Edmonton and distance within the riding. That was very similar to a brief we heard today in Cardston.

Those are the most precise formulas the committee has heard to date. We've heard others suggest that there be formulas developed, but today we heard the two most detailed examples of how that might work.

Grass roots democracy, again with reference to distance to Edmonton and the area within the riding.

Then we were reminded that rural constituencies face unique problems. The declining rural population is a theme that seems to come out quite often in our travels.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you very much for coming out and being with us tonight. As I previously mentioned, everything that's been said this evening is recorded. We have the ability through our computer wizardry when we are trying to formulate our ideas to ask Bob Pritchard and his backup, Robin Wortman, to tell us how many people raised a Triple E Senate, as an example, or how many talked about the need for representation by population. We'll be able to pull those statistics out so we can see, based on the briefs presented across the province, what people were saying to us.

I want to thank you for being patient with us. We've gone well over our scheduled time tonight. Our long-awaited coffee break is now going to come. So thanks again for your input. It's really important to this committee in terms of its deliberations on the future electoral boundaries map of the province.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 9:54 p.m.]

