

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[1:01 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would like to declare the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries meeting being held here in Pincher Creek now officially open, and with that a special welcome to those of you who have come out today. I expect that this being a Friday afternoon, others may come along during the process. That's certainly fine, and we appreciate it. We're scheduled to be here for two hours. We have one member, Pam, who must get away at 3 o'clock because of a commitment a good number of miles away from here. So she'll be leaving at 3 sharp.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, could you pull the microphone a little closer? I'm having a little trouble hearing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I'll speak a little louder. These microphones are not hooked into the system; they're for *Hansard*. But could I suggest that there are lots of seats right at the front. Could some of you come up to the front and sit here?

I mentioned that this is a two-hour scheduled meeting. In past meetings we've done everything humanly possible to accommodate each and every person who has a brief, whether it be written or an oral/verbal presentation, so all those who wish to be heard will be heard. Being a Friday afternoon and with some of the commitments, we must shut down no later than 3:45 if we do go over. So what I'm saying is that we can go two hours and 45 minutes – 45 minutes beyond the scheduled time – if need be.

There are a couple of other comments I want to make before we go through our general introductory process. Pat Ledgerwood will first lead us through the court cases in British Columbia and the actual background to why this committee has been struck, and then Tom Sigurdson will lead us through some slides to show the number-crunching we've done in Alberta to date.

Before doing any of that, I'd like to introduce the members of the committee who are with us today. Beginning at my far left, Mr. Patrick Ledgerwood. Pat is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta. He not only has extensive background with our own electoral process but served on the most recent federal elections commission which increased the number of Alberta ridings from 21 to 26. So he's had extensive background in that area, and we feel very fortunate to have him as part of our committee.

Pat Black represents the constituency of Calgary-Foothills. She's a Progressive Conservative member of the Assembly. Tom Sigurdson is from Edmonton-Belmont. He's a New Democratic member of the Assembly. He worked with the late Grant Notley when Mr. Notley served on a previous Electoral Boundaries Commission, so Tom brings a special expertise here as well. Going down to the far right, Pam Barrett. Pam is the House Leader for the New Democratic Party in Alberta. She represents the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands. Next to Pam is Frank Bruseker. Frank represents the constituency of Calgary-North West, and he's a member of the Liberal caucus. Mike Cardinal is a Progressive Conservative MLA, representing the constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche. Of course, we're very pleased, and we've made a practice wherever we're in a constituency, to invite the host MLA to join us and become part of our panel for the day. That should in no way inhibit Fred

from making any comments he wishes in terms of this constituency or its uniqueness. So Fred Bradley, a good friend and colleague, welcome. And I'm Bob Bogle, from Taber-Warner.

Also with us we have Bob Pritchard and Robin Wortman, who are our backup. When things go well we smile and take credit, and when they don't go well we blame our staff. But things have gone pretty well by and large.

The process we'll follow: we'll ask the first two or three presenters to come forward and sit at the table over on the side. Even though we have microphones and everything which is said will be recorded and available to the public through *Hansard*, we've tried to keep our meetings as informal as possible. We're here to seek your input, your advice, and we're trying to do that in the most direct way we can, so we've tried to conduct ourselves accordingly. The process is that the first presenter will give us his or her brief and I'll then ask members of the committee if they have any questions or comments they wish to make. We urge the committee members not to go into lengthy speeches or debates with the presenter but to ask questions if they have some. Then we throw it open to those in the room if you have a supplementary comment or question you'd like to pose as well. Once we're satisfied we've dealt with the first presentation, we move on to number two and so on down the line.

One other thing I'd like to stress: some people have confused the role of our committee with that of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. As you know, in the past we had – and we will have subsequent to our work – a commission which actually looks at drawing lines between constituencies. That is not our role as a committee. We are not drawing lines; we are looking at the parameters, the guidelines, that the committee will follow. During the last redistribution process in 1983-84, the government set out in legislation that there shall be 42 urban and 41 rural seats. That's the kind of thing we're looking at: principles. If we can go back to the Assembly with a unanimously approved set of recommendations, chances are they'll be implemented in the legislation and that, in turn, will be the guideline for our Electoral Boundaries Commission. So we're not actually drawing the lines.

I think those are the key points I wanted to make. I'm now going to turn it over to Pat Ledgerwood, who will give you the background, the court case in British Columbia, and the events which really have led to the creation of this committee. Following Pat's presentation, Tom will lead us through the slides.

Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The situation in B.C. was such that they had one riding with only 5,600 persons, and it ranged through to the high of 68,000. As a result of this, they wanted to equalize their electoral divisions. There was a commission struck, headed by Justice Fisher, called the Fisher commission. Basically, they made three recommendations: that they eliminate the dual-member ridings in British Columbia, that they increase the number of MLAs from 69 to 75, and the factor that influences our committee was that the total population be divided by 75, establishing an average, and each of the electoral divisions be no more than 25 percent above this average and no less than 25 percent below. So this is where we got the plus or minus 25 percent.

The Fisher report was tabled. The government didn't act quickly enough to satisfy a Professor Dixon, so he took the government of B.C. to court. Chief Justice Madam McLachlin

heard the case, and it's referred to as the McLachlin decision. She based her decision on the Charter of Rights, that each citizen have an equal vote. She basically supported the Fisher commission and also supported the average plus or minus 25 percent and passed this to the Legislature for action. There was no appeal issued on Justice McLachlin's decision.

Professor Dixon didn't feel the government acted quickly enough, so he went to court again. By this time Chief Justice McLachlin had been elevated to the Supreme Court of Canada, so the second case was heard before Justice Meredith. Justice Meredith agreed that Justice McLachlin's decision would stand, but he did not want to get into government. He said that courts have nothing to do with governing the province. So he left it up to the government to react. He said the court would not dissolve the government. The government reacted to this by forming a commission, and they tabled their report on January 15. It became law the end of January. So B.C. now has 75 electoral divisions, and the voter population is within plus or minus 25 percent of that average.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.

Any questions of Pat on the background? Keep in mind that was a court case in British Columbia. It can be argued that it does not have a direct bearing on us. On the other hand, we know the implications. We're trying very hard to address the issue in Alberta so we can avoid a court challenge or, if indeed there is a court challenge, we can withstand it.

Okay. We'll move on to the slides.

MR. SIGURDSON: The first slide you see is . . . Some of the slides you'll see are contained in the kit that was handed out at the back of the room. There are other slides that will be presented a little later on that are not in the kit, and they may take a little more explanation.

This first slide is the list of the constituencies in alphabetical order and their voter population beside them. You'll note that we do have the Cardston constituency that is footnoted, because the Cardston constituency contains within its boundaries the Blood Indians. They chose not to be involved in the enumeration process. At the latest enumeration figures there were approximately 1,800, so the Cardston constituency is a little bit low.

Taking the 83 constituencies and then putting them in order according to voter population, you see that we have a top end of 31,536 at Edmonton-Whitemud and at the bottom end Cardston at 8,100.

Adding all those names together, you get approximately one and a half million eligible voters in our province. If you divide that number by the 83 constituencies, you end up with an average of 18,685. Now, taking the recommendation that came out of the McLachlin decision in British Columbia, where you have a permitted variance or permitted tolerance of plus or minus 25 percent, if you add 25 percent, you have a top end of 23,356 or a bottom end of 14,014.

This slide is again showing the constituencies in numerical sequence. Those constituencies highlighted in green are the constituencies that have the average voter population plus they're over the 25 percent suggested tolerance level. Those constituencies highlighted in pink are 25 percent below average and therefore outside the suggested bottom-end tolerance.

When we put that on the map of our province by constituency, you can see that those constituencies highlighted in pink are the ones that are below the 25 percent end. There are two little

coloured areas, and they're the city of St. Albert and the city of Medicine Hat. They're highlighted in green, they're over, but you can barely make that out.

Again looking at constituencies, we can see the city of Calgary. The constituencies highlighted in green are well over the 25 percent top end. You can see that with this one and with the next slide as well, Bob, if you can turn to Edmonton that has the number of areas shaded in green, those constituencies on the outer edge of the city are still growing. The inner-city constituencies are certainly within the permitted allowance, but we have a number of constituencies on the periphery that are growing still.

Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West: those two constituencies, have no problem with their voter population. They're well within the average. However, the city of Medicine Hat has a major problem. It's the fourth largest in the province, I believe, with its voter population currently. They've got a very large voter population that they will have to deal with or we will have to deal with at some point.

The two constituencies in Red Deer are a bit unique. In the 1983-84 Electoral Boundaries Commission, Red Deer was one constituency and was wholly within the city boundaries. Its population was far too large for one MLA to handle, and if you divided the city in half, there wasn't sufficient population to really have two constituencies. What they had to do was to go out into Red Deer county to bump up the population to sufficient numbers. The brown line is the city boundary and the outside line is the boundary of the county. That's how they got their population up to a level that was acceptable for two constituencies.

The city of St. Albert: again, right next door to the city of Edmonton, a bedroom community, I suppose. It's still growing and is well above the 25 percent above average level.

Turning again to the map of our province, we've taken the constituencies that fall below 35 percent of the average and highlighted those in purple. You can see there are quite a number that have to be highlighted in purple. These are below 35 percent of the average. This map shows those constituencies that fall 50 percent below average. As you can see, they're all in the south end of our province.

These blue dots indicate those places in Alberta this committee has traveled to or will travel to in the very near future. What we've tried to do is hit as many communities as possible where there's been an expressed interest. You'll see on the next slide that we have the dates and the places for where we're going next. So if you really like today's presentation and you want to come up to Slave Lake next week, that's where we're going to be. Again, showing those constituencies that have a voter population 35 percent below the average, you can see that when we add the locations we're to visit, we're trying to get into those areas where angels fear to tread and fools don't know any better. That's where we're going to receive as many submissions as we possibly can.

Again, what we've also looked at is that currently we divide our constituencies just on the basis of elected voters. One of the questions that came up very early in the role of the committee was to consider whether or not we should be basing constituencies on total population and not just the voter population. We have a number of people . . . You can see the difference between the enumeration figures of one and a half million and then the total population being 2,365,000. MLAs represent all the people regardless of their political participation or not. There are religious communities that do not want to participate

in the electoral process, but when they've got a problem, they phone their MLA. Landed immigrants: the same thing. Indian reservations. Then the largest group, I suppose, is those people that fall under the age of 18. The province spends well over a billion dollars on education every year, yet we don't include them in the constituency count. When you include them in the constituency count, you increase the average so that your average now becomes 28,500. If you again use the suggested variance of 25 percent, you have a top end of 35,600 or a bottom end of 21,378.

You'll see in the next number of slides that it does make quite a difference to how the constituencies shape up. Again, the green highlights show those constituencies that are above the 25 percent average, but we've moved from having 19 constituencies above average to 18. At the bottom end we've fallen from 24 constituencies that were 25 percent below average to 22. You can see the dramatic difference is that Cardston was at the bottom on the electors-only list and it's moved up to about the middle of the low end by using the total population calculation figure.

If you recall the first time we showed you the map, there were very few green dots on our province. We now have two rural constituencies, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray, that have voter populations above the 25 percent suggested tolerance. These constituencies that are highlighted in pink are still below the 25 percent.

Calgary stays pretty much the same, but you can still see there is a little bit of change in those constituencies that are on the border of the city - still above the 25 percent. It's pretty well the same thing with Edmonton. Some of the constituencies change a little bit.

Here, where we start looking at the province and those constituencies that are under 35 percent, if we just go with the enumerated list of eligible voters, we had 16 constituencies that were below 35 percent. Using the total population, that number falls to 12.

Where you really see the difference is those constituencies that had a voter population 50 percent below the average. We had five; going to a total population figure, we're down to one, and here we are today in Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, and that's the constituency that's still below.

The final slide shows that we've traveled to other jurisdictions. We've been in Regina, Winnipeg, and Victoria looking at their electoral boundaries process. We've had a number of public hearings. We started off having rather low turnouts. That's because in first instances apparently the message did not get out to a number of people, but as you can see, the numbers are increasing. To date . . . Have you got last night's submissions in there, Bob?

MR. PRITCHARD: No, I don't.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, with last night and Cardston . . .

MR. PRITCHARD: There were 16 last night.

MR. SIGURDSON: And Cardston?

MR. PRITCHARD: Cardston was 21.

MR. SIGURDSON: So we've had 92 written submissions, a number of other oral submissions, and we're going to hear a few today and certainly a number next week as well.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'll open it up for any questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom. Any questions of Tom?

We've given you a lot of statistics, and they're really two completely different approaches. The first is the historical pattern we've been following in Alberta using a voters list only, and the second is looking at a system used in a number of other jurisdictions where you look at the total population list. While that doesn't solve the problem in rural communities, you can see that due to the larger families in rural Alberta vis-à-vis urban Alberta, it does help with the numbers.

Yes. Go ahead, Doug.

MR. THORNTON: Mr. Chairman, has there been an estimate made on the number of voters on the Blood Indian reserve? The number that's in the packet is the number of residents, I think.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The number in the packet is our best guesstimate on the number of eligible voters. We were advised yesterday at a meeting in Cardston that that number itself may be half the actual number. But as Pat pointed out at our meeting yesterday, that's our best guesstimate based on past enumerated lists. If you're using the census Canada list, you've got the precise list. That's what the population figure would use as its basis. In this case we'd have to go back to 1985 for census if we use the census list.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We'd have to go the 1986 census.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The '86 census.

Anything else for clarification?

MR. PATIENCE: I'd like to know if the McLachlin decision was based on total population or electoral population?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Electoral.

Anyone else? Okay, let's move on with our briefs. Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: Right. I'd ask the first three presenters to come up, please: Dr. John Irwin, Doug Thornton, and Hugh Lynch-Staunton.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think John's here yet. Why don't we go on to the next one and just save that spot for John.

MR. PRITCHARD: All right. Would you like to come up?

MR. LYNCH-STANTON: Mr. Chairman and committee members, thanks very much for giving me the opportunity to express my views today. I was somewhat alarmed when I saw the constituency breakdown of these population figures, from a very selfish view, feeling there would be a logical movement to enlarge or lose the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. So I'm going to confine my remarks to the reasons that I hope will convince you not to do that.

Even though representation by population is a laudable principle that I think we all share, it must be tempered by the absolute necessity of hands-on representation in a constituency. There are a number of factors that I think are peculiar to Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, which makes the job of our MLA giving hands-on representation extremely difficult. The first and most obvious is the distance from Edmonton and the lack of fast

transportation, scheduled airlines specifically, to our constituency. The next point, which is less obvious, is the diversity of our economic activity. Even though we only have 9,000 people on our voters list, these people are employed in a very diverse economy including mining, forestry, various types of agriculture, tourism, petroleum, et cetera. Geographical factors within the constituency include very distinct communities and widely scattered populations. The Crowsnest Pass depends on economic activity in British Columbia. We've got large sections of public land, transportation corridors, pipelines, power lines. We also have a number of different political jurisdictions: various towns, MDs, villages, improvement districts, a federal government presence in Waterton park and with Indian Affairs. For all these reasons our representative must be extremely diligent, not only in making our various views known to the Legislature but in keeping the levels of communication open between a very diversified community. We are also distinctive in another sense. Unlike many rural constituencies, our population is likely to grow as we recognize our opportunities in tourism.

So in summary, Mr. Chairman, the type of representation we need would be impossible or very difficult under a larger jurisdiction. Unless some of you would like to question my logic, that's all I have to say. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Hugh.  
Questions from the panel? Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: If you don't want to increase the geographical size of the constituencies, thereby increasing the voter population in some of the rural constituencies in order to have a more equitable distribution of voter population throughout our province, would you be in favour of increasing the number of urban MLAs to somehow find some equity?

MR. LYNCH-STANTON: I'm better at pointing out problems than solutions to them. That would be preferable to me if that were necessary. Of course, as one of the most rural citizens of a rural constituency to start with, I don't want to give up any perceived political power I have, which that would do. But that would certainly be more preferable to me than the other alternative.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks. Anyone else? Anyone from the audience? Thanks very much, Hugh.

Doug, you're next. This is a busy day for you.

MR. THORNTON: Yes; an exciting one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: An exciting one for all of us. Just for other members of the panel, Doug is the chairman of Lethbridge Community College, and they're officially opening the new gymnasium complex, which has been a long time in the planning and coming. Doug has played a key role in that.

MR. THORNTON: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, hon. committee members, ladies and gentlemen, may I take this opportunity to welcome you to Pincher Creek, part of the best little constituency in the province.

Our town and our constituency are struggling to maintain themselves against the various forces that typically draw people and population into the large urban centres. We work hard to

try and come up with economic development initiatives, tourism initiatives, and things like that to try and maintain our population, and it's a constant battle. I am concerned that if we begin to look at the possibility of taking our representation to our provincial government and watering that down, we will make it even more difficult to mount economic initiatives that are necessary to maintain a rural way of life that we enjoy here in the southwest corner of the province.

When one considers that our MLA must take five and a half hours to drive from Edmonton to Pincher Creek to his home in the Crowsnest Pass, or four and one half hours if he is to take an airplane from Edmonton to Calgary and then drive; or considers a round trip, that being 11 hours driving or 9 hours flying and driving - incidentally, those times rely on the RCMP looking aside at a travel speed of a little over the speed limit - one day out of each work week can be used up just to come home to talk to constituents. One day. That doesn't sound like much when you say it. As a matter of fact, five and a half hours; that's not much. But boy, that's a big percentage of an MLA's total time. And then when you consider that our MLA must drive at least an hour to get from one end of this constituency to another, provided he doesn't take a side trip into one of our large rural areas in which Hugh lives - to drive all the main roads in the constituency would require probably three hours just to get by and look at the homes of constituents, let alone speak to constituents and talk to their concerns. In looking at the maps, it appears that most urban MLAs can walk across their constituencies in less time than our MLA can drive.

An MLA representing a rural constituency must be aware of every government program that comes down. He must know what's happening with social services, with highways and transportation, Economic Development and Trade, Career Development and Employment, Education, Advanced Education, Environment, Agriculture, Tourism, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. Plus he must be aware of all the federal initiatives that come down, because as a representative of government, each of you who sits in the Legislature knows that not every Albertan distinguishes between federal problems and provincial problems. If you're the elected representative, you will be asked about those problems. I've no doubt that each of you has been asked about the goods and services tax, as an example.

A rural MLA, in addition to being fully aware of all the government programs and Alberta programs, must be aware of the concerns of all the various elected corporate bodies in his constituency. He must be familiar with all the goals and aspirations of every town, village, and MD council. He must be aware of the needs of public and separate school boards. He must have something to say to recreation boards, to library boards, to economic development boards, to chambers of commerce, to hospital boards. By contrast, those members who represent urban constituencies, while not diminishing the amount of work they do, are usually a part of a group of individuals, 16 or 18 in number, that do represent large numbers of citizens. But those citizens are also represented by very forceful city councils and school boards and economic development offices, and basically each government department is shadowed by a similar one in the urban centres.

From speaking to my friends in the urban areas, their normal response if they have a problem is to go first to their alderman and then to their MLA. If there is something in the city that the alderman cannot handle, it is probable that located in one of our major urban centres there is at very least a senior civil servant

of every single portfolio of government, some place where a person can go to get answers about social services, about economic development and trade. I believe that expectations of MLAs are far less in the urban centres. Not to diminish the responsibility or the work performed by urban MLAs, the fact of life is that when someone here thinks of government, they don't think, "Well, I'm going to go and see the mayor and get my social service cheque fixed." They think, "I'm going to talk to my representative of government; I don't care if it's 2 o'clock in the morning, I'm going to phone him."

I realize that this committee is going to only make recommendations as to the formation of an electoral boundaries commission, but if we were to take the recommendations of the McLachlin decision and apply those to what might happen in southern Alberta – I want to show you a map which I believe you have seen. The idea was presented to you – I believe it was a presentation from Bow Island and Medicine Hat. In any case, this paper was circulated throughout southern Alberta yesterday, and here it shows what it might look like if the 25 percent rule was put into effect here in southern Alberta. Very briefly, what it would require is the combination of the existing Pincher Creek-Crowsnest constituency with existing Macleod to come up with a constituency with a population, given existing enumeration data, of 20,310. It still makes sense; I mean, it's within the numbers and all that. But now let's think about what an MLA would have to do to service this new constituency.

He'd have to be familiar with the concerns of the municipality of the Crowsnest Pass, the village of Lundbreck, the village of Cowley, the town of Pincher Creek, the hamlet of Twin Butte, the Peigan Indian Reserve, the town of Fort Macleod, the village of Granum, the town of Claresholm, the village of Stavely, and all the agricultural people who reside in that area. Given the transfer times, the travel times that are required, it's a gargantuan task, and I submit that it would not be possible to fairly look after each of the concerns of the people in this constituency. Similar problems would exist in a new constituency involving one-half of what is now Taber-Warner and all of Cypress-Redcliff. And then if you take and combine the constituency of Little Bow with Bow Valley, that stretches almost the full width of the province. I don't know. Maybe expense accounts could be increased for MLAs to allow the chartering of a lot of airplanes just to get from one council meeting to another.

The other thing is that rural MLAs must understand agriculture, the third largest employer and income producer in the province but far and away the most problem-plagued segment of our economy. That in itself almost requires a full-time understanding of a very complex industry. An urban MLA, even though he represents more people, does not have to address producer subsidies and things like that.

When we talk about fairness, the McLachlin decision certainly does appear to be fair. I mean, why should one person have more access, according to numbers, to his MLA than another? Well, I believe I've pointed out that if the MLA is too busy either traveling to the constituency or meeting with other constituents, you're taking away access to the government for people who live in the rural areas. Of course, the McLachlin decision is very closely modeled after the federal electoral boundaries Act. That Act seems to work fairly well in the Canadian context, but as you make your recommendations one must remember that there are some very significant differences.

Under the federal electoral boundaries Act we have a Senate, which at this time is designed somewhat to represent the regions of the country. But if we happen to be lucky enough some day

to come up with a Triple E Senate, of course we'll have very good representation of our regions. There is a safety net there. Under the federal system we have four MPs from the province of Prince Edward Island with a population of 260,000. Those four MPs under the federal system are regulated there, and those four will not be diminished, even if the population of Prince Edward Island decreases or the population of Canada as a whole doubles or triples. They will always have at least four MPs. In other words, they won't lose their representation because of a discrepancy in the size of their province. And we must find a way to not take away representation from those of us in rural Alberta just because of a discrepancy in numbers. In other words, we now have 26 MPs from Alberta and we will retain 26 MPs from Alberta even though those electoral boundaries within the province may be changed.

What I think we want to do is get away from what I would like to call the tyranny of the majority. I want to remind you of one time when we all sat in front of our television sets and listened to our Premier Peter Lougheed talking about the national energy program. We think back to that time when the majority in Canada – central Ontario, southern Ontario – wanted Alberta's oil and gas at a discount rate; they had the majority, and they took it. Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot allow that kind of discrepancy to happen in Alberta, pitting Albertans' interests against other Albertans.

What I would like to ask is that some way be found in your recommendations to the boundaries commission to maintain the 42 urban and 41 rural constituencies. Those constituencies may very well need to be adjusted within the rural area and the urban area, but don't take away the amount of representation of rural versus urban. It may mean that an urban constituency could have more residents in it than a rural constituency, but given access to the government, it's the only way that I can see we can maintain any kind of service from the government into the whole province. We are, after all, all Albertans.

The last thing I would ask you is that as you are thinking of your recommendations in the formation of the boundaries commission, please allow some time for any of this to take place. Right now our government has started several different initiatives to help rural Alberta. If all of a sudden we are to change the representation to government from rural Alberta, our access will diminish substantially, and perhaps all these good initiatives that are started may go unneeded, because our populations will further diminish.

I want to thank you very much for your time, for listening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Doug.

MR. SIGURDSON: You talk about the problems you've got in rural depopulation. As an urban member I'm very cognizant of the problems you've got in rural depopulation, because those people that leave rural Alberta end up in the cities. Some of them end up in my constituency, and they bring with them all kinds of problems as well. They don't leave rural Alberta free of problems.

Right now we've got a split that's 60 percent urban and 40 percent rural – I think I'm probably being generous with that – and representation that's pretty much 50-50. I'm wondering at what point on that scale, if rural population continues in the trend that's not just exclusive to Alberta or to Canada or to North America but is worldwide, would you start making adjustments for representation at the provincial level: 65-35, 70-30? I ask you that in all sincerity.

MR. THORNTON: The thrust of my presentation was based on the idea that adjustments should be made within urban boundaries and within rural boundaries. I don't think the 50-50 statement really applies here. What we're talking about is access to government, access to the services we all as Albertans pay for through our tax dollars and expect from our government. So I am reluctant to say 65-35, 70-30, or anything like that. I believe that when a time comes when it is very obvious that a person who is living in an urban constituency is not able to be given the services of the government of Alberta to which he is entitled, that's when it should shift, and probably at that time only through the addition of more members in an urban area as opposed to taking those ridings and representation away from the rural constituencies.

MR. SIGURDSON: We now have cases where in some constituencies that have a voter population of the high 20,000s, there may be three constituents waiting to see their MLA. The MLA has the opportunity to meet with one constituent, say you schedule on a half-hour basis. You come out; you've got two constituents waiting. That could equal the travel time between the Pass and Pincher Creek. Now, I don't see a great deal of difference whether one travels. In fact, I sometimes wish I had the opportunity to add an hour out of my constituency office and think about the previous constituent, because as I move in from one constituent to the next, I don't necessarily always have the time to formulate a letter or formulate even my thoughts sometimes to satisfy that constituent. So I guess the question again is: at what point? We now have 60-40.

MR. THORNTON: Well, again, if we're to talk about the way a rural MLA looks after that same problem, he may very well have people waiting in his office. My recollection is, if you want an appointment it's 15 minutes here. Time is spread very, very tightly out here, especially when you take one day a week away for travel to and from Edmonton.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks.  
Pam, and then Frank.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. You showed us this map that appeared in a newspaper - I've seen a copy of it before - and you point out that if you combine Pincher Creek-Crowsnest with Macleod, you would impose a formidable task upon your MLA. You make your argument on the basis of accessibility and the ability of the MLA to do the job. Are all those assumptions correct so far?

MR. THORNTON: So far.

MS BARRETT: Okay. How is it, then, you assume that an MLA, for instance, in an area that is more than twice the size of a combined riding of Macleod and Pincher Creek-Crowsnest - namely, Chinook or any number of other large ridings - is able to do their job?

MR. THORNTON: My assumption is based on the idea that constituencies such as Chinook do not have more than two major population centres in them. That was my concern, that really if you talk about a combined Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and Macleod, the major centres being Claresholm, Fort

Macleod, Pincher Creek, and the Crowsnest Pass - and I don't want to make light of the village councils that are there, because they've got as many concerns as anyone else.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Well, I was in Chinook just a few days ago. The argument was made to this committee that Chinook is consistently, if sparsely, populated - in other words, you don't go for long tracts of highway without having small communities there - and therefore the demand for the MLA's presence is actually evenly distributed across the board. Now, I know that this argument is the case for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, because one of our committee members has made that case several times. So one has to conclude that some MLAs representing very large ridings are able to do it. Why could that not be the case here?

MR. THORNTON: I realize there are smaller centres, but I go back to my case that it's the major centres and the villages and towns. Now, there are small pockets of population throughout this constituency, every constituency in the province. But those may or may not be dealt with in terms other than as a hamlet which is looked after almost completely by its MD. There are not major town councils or village councils there that have to be dealt with. That takes a significant amount of time when one realizes that each town council also has an economic development board that demands time of the MLA and so on.

MS BARRETT: Okay. So finally, then, if I could, Mr. Chairman, we should not assume that you would argue for cutting down some of these larger rural constituencies and making them smaller.

MR. THORNTON: I guess I didn't make myself too clear, what I think. If the number of constituencies in the province was to remain, using the 42-41 formula, there very possibly still could be some realignment of sizes of constituencies within that framework, the 42-41. What I don't want to see, however, is to take away six or seven rural constituencies throughout the province because of the problem I outlined in my presentation and put those into the city. If there is too much workload within the city to look after the constituents there, then realign the boundaries within the cities, still having in mind the 42-41 formula.

MS BARRETT: You see, I just don't understand how all this would work if you say the issue is access, in the first instance; in the second instance you say leave the ratio the same; in the third instance you say you don't know at what point in population distribution between urban and rural descriptions you would agree to changing the ratio; and then finally you say: if it's too much within the cities, change them around but don't add. I just don't know which is your final argument here.

MR. THORNTON: Well, they're all part of it. If we retain the 42-41 formula, and there are areas within the city that are less populous than others, just as there are areas within the rural area that are less populated, that would have to be realigned and redefined within the rural area, and . . .

MS BARRETT: Without adding to them.

MR. THORNTON: Without adding. Once the population gets totally unmanageable in the cities, at that time add in the cities.

MS BARRETT: Okay. So your bottom line is: don't take away any rural ridings, but if absolutely necessary and if you have to do something, then add to the cities to balance it out?

MR. THORNTON: That's right. But let's not get too large an imbalance between the population of a city and the number of representation in the city compared to the rural, because we don't want to get back to a situation where the cities are able to run over the needs and desires of the rural constituencies.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks.  
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you. Doug, just one quick question. No matter whether you compare Pincher Creek-Crowsnest to the cities or to the other rural constituencies, it's small. If you do an average of just the 41 rural constituencies, you get an average of about 14,000 constituents per constituency, which means no matter how you slice it Pincher Creek is pretty small. Would you be in favour of equalizing just among the rural constituencies? Forget about all the urban ones for a moment. Just amongst the rural constituencies, would you be in favour of increasing the area of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest constituency to equalize the number of constituents per constituency?

MR. THORNTON: I guess if we must make some recommendation to the boundaries commission, that would be far more palatable to me than to take away the number of rural constituencies. So the reply to your answer is yes.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much. Anyone else on the panel? Anyone else?

Thanks very much, Doug and Hugh.

Bob, can you call our next couple of presenters forward?

MR. PRITCHARD: Could I have Hilton Pharis and Dick Burgman come up, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Dick, could we start with you.

MR. BURGMAN: Thank you. You called Hilton first, so I presumed he would be going first here.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today. When I first looked at the letter that was addressed to "Dear Albertan," one of the first things I looked at was the letterhead itself. I found it rather interesting that of the seven members on the committee only two are representing rural ridings. This seems to be, to my view at least, what this whole thing is about. A further two members represented urban ridings which fell within, as I recall, the green area . . . I'm sorry?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I stop you for a second and possibly explain the process?

As you know, our committee is made up of one member of the Liberal Party, two members of the New Democratic Party, and four members of the governing Conservative Party. Each caucus selected its members to sit on the committee, so that's not something the Legislature as a body did. That's something

each of the three caucuses did.

MR. BURGMAN: Okay. Certainly at your earlier comments at the beginning of the meeting, had I been aware of some of these things I probably would have made a few different comments or extra comments in my presentation. In any case, that's what came to mind at the time. And I applaud the all-party composition of the committee, that it isn't just strictly a Conservative committee.

Mr. Getty since the last election has certainly professed a particular interest in the rural representation in the province by establishing an office in Stettler, among other things. However, I think the representation of rural populations is only going to become more difficult if this proposed realignment actually becomes fact. Also, the provincial Conservatives have been right at the forefront of a Triple E Senate concept. Translating this principle to the provincial situation from the federal situation, the proposed redrawing of the boundaries on the basis of population only kind of goes against this idea of area or regional representation, as is the idea of the Triple E Senate at the federal level.

Of the 43 ridings that don't fall within the proposed 25 plus or minus guidelines, it's interesting that 19 of them are urban ridings. This kind of gets back to the initial comment that I made. The elected representative has an easier job in the urban centre, even though he may have more people to deal with, simply because it's a smaller area. I think this gets back to what Doug was getting at in terms of the difficulty of representation. The other 24 rural MLAs, however, have fewer people to represent, but they're spread over a much larger area. I don't think it's very much a question, to me at least, that the urban people have better access.

Getting to what Tom was saying, granted you may have two or three people waiting outside your office while you're dealing with one of your constituents. However, we may very well phone up Fred's office and want to make an appointment with him, and we may not be able to get in for three days. Preferable to me at least would be to be able to get in immediately and wait an hour rather than have to wait for three or four days to get in to talk to him at all, simply because he's in one of the far, far reaches of the riding. To Ms Barrett's comment about the other rural ridings being just as large and just as difficult, that Mr. Cardinal obviously has some of the same problems that Fred has: just because somebody else has it, that doesn't mean our particular situation is something we should back off pressuring, if you like, for some improvement. Granted, we are the smallest, but I'm sure Mr. Cardinal might agree with the same argument, that just because there are other ridings in the province, that doesn't mean nothing should be done about it. I want to make that comment on that argument.

When you're comparing the operating advantage or disadvantage from rural to urban MLAs, there are three or four major points, one of them being that Fred, for instance, has to cover several hundred square miles of territory in his travels, whereas most urban representatives are probably a few square blocks. The rural constituents themselves have to travel relatively long distances to get to see their MLA in his or her office. But the MLA himself, as Doug mentioned, may have to travel up to one to one and a half days of actual working time. If you're looking at 12 hours for a round trip, that's a day and a half of eight-hour days to spend just a couple of days in his riding. So this becomes a real problem. Again, Mr. Cardinal and the other rural MLAs run into the same thing, but that

doesn't lessen the problem of any of them, just because somebody else has the same problem. It doesn't make my problem or your problem or anybody else's problem any less important simply because there are lots of people with problems.

The rural MLA has, as Doug Thornton again mentioned, many different school boards, hospital boards, library boards, municipal councils, village councils: these kinds of things to deal with. Whereas you take a fairly good-sized riding in Calgary or Edmonton; they may have up to 16 or 17 members to deal with a single municipal council, two different school boards, one separate and one public: this kind of thing.

We'd like to make some proposals on our own as to how the present situation might be dealt with. The present formula of a roughly 50-50 rural/urban split – it is split in that way in terms of the number of seats in the House. Basically we would like to see it remain that way. We wouldn't like to see any existing rural riding eliminated until the government's had several years to implement some of the concentrated programs they're implementing now for diversification and industrialization of the rural areas.

One of the things I'm finding, particularly in the Crowsnest Pass – I happen to be working not in the real estate business but my office is in a real estate office. I'm finding that a lot of people from the cities are coming down and buying property, buying houses, down in the Crowsnest Pass and in the Pincher Creek area and out towards West Castle and these places, because they're looking ahead five or 10 years to retirement and they want to get out of the city. I have a feeling that five or 10 years down the road, by the turn of the century, it could very well be that there is going to be a reversal, this flow of population that's presently going into the city turning around and coming back out to the rural areas and finding that there are an awful lot of things they don't like in the city.

The second thing that is affecting this is the fact that statistics show that a bigger and bigger proportion of our population now is getting older. Senior citizens: these kinds of people for the most part – well, maybe for the most part is an exaggeration, but for a large part at least – are wanting to get away from the cities. They can't get on the darn golf course in the city; they've got to wait two weeks for a tee time. You get out to High River or Okotoks or Blairmore or Pincher Creek or Fort Macleod or any of these kinds of places, hop in your car, and go out and play golf. You can go skiing; you don't have to drive for three hours to get there: these kinds of things. I think there's a shift here with older people, at least, who are, let us not forget, becoming a bigger portion of the population and are shifting away from the cities to our rural areas. So my request here would be that we give this thing some time, because I think and I feel – and I have some statistical evidence to support this feeling – that there is going to be a shift from the city back to the rural areas for any number of reasons. If that's the case, it could very well be that 10 or 15 years from now we're going to be having these hearings again, but the coin is going to be flipped over and city people are going to be saying: "Hey, son of a gun. We're losing our population. Now, all of a sudden these rural people are the tail that's wagging the dog," sort of thing. So let's have a little consideration about that.

Federal statutes as well right now do not allow any kind of representation to fall below existing levels, and I think perhaps Alberta should be looking at a similar kind of a thing. Doug mentioned as well that there was reference in the federal legislation that certain areas are guaranteed that they will never have any fewer than X number of MPs in the federal House.

That about wraps it up. I'm not going to dwell on the other things that repeat what Doug already said, because I think he did it very well and very eloquently and represented us very well. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Dick. Any questions from the panel members? Any from the audience? Thank you.  
Hilton.

MR. PHARIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the board, and ladies and gentlemen. I'm going to try not to be too repetitious, but I wish to particularly address item (f) in the list of items your committee will be considering, and that is:

the impact of the determination of the constituency boundaries on the ability of Members of the Legislative Assembly to . . . discharge their duties in their constituencies.

I think it would be quite safe to say that this constituency is one of the most difficult constituencies to represent in rural Alberta. We have such a diversity of activities. Many areas of the province are now becoming embroiled in environmental issues. We've been struggling with them here for 27 years, I believe it is, when the first gas plant went in south of Pincher Creek. Mr. Chairman, you are quite familiar with some of those struggles. With the impact of logging and the controversy that goes with that, with at present the construction of the Oldman dam and the other environmental and potential tourist activities along the fringe of it, this is a particularly difficult rural constituency to represent.

Now, I personally find it hard to accept that my representation is going to be less by the possibility, which is quite real here, of having the constituency either eliminated or combined with another constituency. It seems to me that this problem, if there is a problem with the urban areas, is because the urban areas have grown so dramatically over the last few decades in Alberta, not because our constituency has dramatically dropped in population. It would seem to me that if this problem exists, the only reasonable alternative is more representation from the urban areas if they're so large that the members cannot represent their constituents in that area. Increasing the size of the Legislature is not popular and I don't like it either, but if that is the problem, because the cities have grown so dramatically, that would seem to me the reasonable way to approach it.

I was going to speak about the geographical problems, but they've been covered quite well by the previous speakers, so I think, Mr. Chairman, I will just leave my remarks at that point. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Hilton.

Questions or comments from the committee? Pam.

MS BARRETT: You realize that by recommending what you have recommended – and I know it was sort of a qualified recommendation; that is, if something needs to be done, then do this – that you would be changing the ratio between urban and rural seats.

MR. PHARIS: Yes, Ms Barrett, I realize that, but I think we have to live with realities. The reality of life in Alberta is that the urban population has grown dramatically, and that seems to be the cause of our present dilemma. If the population of Calgary and Edmonton was the same as it was 25 years ago, I don't believe we would have this perceived imbalance that we're talking about here.



MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?

All right. John.

DR. IRWIN: As mayor of the beautiful municipality of Crowsnest Pass I would first like to express my appreciation for having the opportunity to come and make a representation regarding provincial electoral boundaries. I have with me a brief presentation on behalf of our community, with as many copies as you need and probably enough for the press if they want one, stating our position, and I will not read that to you. I would simply like to make a few comments and answer any questions you have.

The question was considered by the council of the municipality of Crowsnest Pass, and not surprisingly our council unanimously endorsed the position of requesting that the electoral boundaries remain roughly as they are. We understand what boundary adjustments are all about, and it is appropriate from time to time, reflecting shifts in population, business activity, and so on, that electoral boundaries be adjusted. However, there are a lot of things to consider. One of the things: if we want to get right to the bottom line when we talk about elected representatives, we're talking about votes in the House, and votes in the House mean power. When we talk about boundary adjustments, we're talking about who should have power, who might get a little more power, and who might get a little less power. Carried to its extreme, we have the grand old political tradition of gerrymandering. We know, the guts know, what this is all about.

What we are really talking about, though, is representation in the House of the concerns of the people of Alberta. How can that best be accomplished? We should remember that in provincial government we're talking about a unicameral form of government – that is, one House. We don't have a second House to represent regions equally, to be a voice of sober second thought. We have one Legislature for the whole province. Everyone in the province has problems and concerns which need to be represented. We have a representative form of government; we do not have government by plebiscite. I suppose with technology today that it would be possible to change government entirely and go back almost to the old Greek system where an issue is broadcast around the land; everybody can consider it and cast a vote one way or another and do it as individuals. That is not what representative government, which we have, is all about.

I don't think it follows that we need an extension of government by plebiscite, where you have exactly an equal number of people in each riding telling each MLA how to vote on each issue. The essence of representative government is that a majority of the people in a riding, or at least a plurality of the vote, will go to one member who then is responsible to represent all of the constituents in that riding and all of their concerns, whether or not those people voted for that person.

I don't want to belittle the problems of the cities. Our cities have significant problems. You don't, I think, expect me to say to you, or hardly anyone in this audience say, "Gee, we think the cities should have a whole lot more seats, and we should have a whole lot less rural representation." I doubt any of you came here thinking that. Our council doesn't feel that the number of representatives in the House particularly needs to be increased. The more members we have, the more the government costs, and we'd like to see costs constrained somewhat.

We don't want to belittle the problems of the city, but we

have problems in the countryside which have to be represented by our MLA, and Pincher Creek-Crowsnest is probably one of the best examples in Alberta of just how diverse a constituency can be. We have a rather large area, which includes a number of different municipal councils, a couple of hospital boards, different school divisions. We've got ranching industry, farming industry, oil and gas industry, logging. Some of us are hoping to see the rebirth of coal mining in the area. We have a significant forest reserve, a recreation area, all of which are really important concerns not just for the people who live here but for all the people in Alberta.

At the same time we have urban municipalities, particularly Pincher Creek and Crowsnest Pass, which have almost all of the same problems as the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary. Maybe not to the same scale – we don't have C-Trains – but we do have almost all the other same concerns, and our MLA has to represent all of those problems. Our MLA can't visit all his constituents by walking 20 to 30 minutes from one end of the constituency to the other. Our MLA requires hours to get around the constituency to see people. It takes him a long time to get to Edmonton and back. The logistics for a rural MLA are much more difficult than for a city MLA. In a city where you've got maybe 18 MLAs and you want to deal with a mayor and city council, one of the 18 can do that or maybe two or three. More often a city council might want to get a group of MLAs together. Here the problem is exactly the opposite. You have one MLA and a number of different councils, different school boards, different hospital boards, all of whom have different concerns, and our MLA has to represent those concerns, our problems, to the provincial government. His opinion and our opinion may not necessarily carry the day when the crunch comes, but it has to be properly represented.

Fred Bradley has been our MLA for quite a few years, and many of us, myself included, feel that he's done a tremendous job representing us. Let me tell you, he works hard and I think has as much as any man could handle. I would hate to see any MLA asked to try and represent a lot more area, municipal governments, types of industry, school boards, and so on. We have more than enough in this microcosm of our province, which is Pincher Creek-Crowsnest Pass.

We note that basically this committee is looking at two options: to stick with the traditional system of maintaining a balance between major urban and rural ridings and the proposal which would come closer to strict representation by population. We feel that one man, one vote is certainly quite appropriate within a constituency, but with the diversity of constituencies, we don't think there's anything in our law or tradition that requires every single voter in each constituency to have the same impact when it comes to the House. Our system, I would reiterate, is a representative one, and we need an opportunity to choose our representative and to have that person able to meet with us and take our concerns to the Legislature. Our council, after discussing this matter at length, unanimously resolved to ask this commission to maintain the option of the traditional approach of a fairly equal balance between urban and rural ridings. How you cut up the cities – that's up to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Dr. John.

Any questions from panel members? Yes, Pat, and then Tom.

MRS. BLACK: Dr. Irwin, I'm one of those urban MLAs, and my riding is one of the ridings that is in the upper bracket as far as population. I have 24,000 eligible voters in my riding, and I

have 13,500 homes. You're quite right when you say the distance factor is totally different. My riding is approximately 30 square kilometres, and Pincher Creek-Crowsnest is 5,148 square kilometres. My method of getting around is door-to-door as opposed to driving. So we have different things within our ridings. I also have 20,000 students at the University of Calgary, which brings my eligible voters in my riding throughout the year at approximately 40,000.

So it's a different mix and a different concept. And you're quite right; the requirements are somewhat different. I'm quite often called to serve for Calgary, and I can be in 18 constituencies, probably four or five in a day. So our roles are unique and distinct, and my question to you is: do you feel that there is enough of a distinction between the roles, the urban and the rural, to have a two-tiered system for distribution? I have a problem with somebody saying to me that we have to expand the urban settings. We have 18 MLAs in Calgary. We only have six Members of Parliament. Are you telling me that there's a distinction between urban and rural, enough to provide a two-tiered system, one system to evaluate distribution urbanwise and one for rural?

DR. IRWIN: I think you can make an argument for that. The other thing which I mentioned as I was talking is that a lot of these rural ridings also have urban municipalities with similar concerns as you have in the city.

MRS. BLACK: So what would you do with the situation we have? We have one riding with 31,000 people in it, another one with 8,100.

DR. IRWIN: Actually, I don't think that's a big problem.

MRS. BLACK: Well, we have a problem because there's a court case, a Charter challenge. So there's obviously a problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Pat; let him answer.

DR. IRWIN: I appreciate that, but as I say, our form of government is basically a representative one, and our philosophy is that we go to the polls to elect somebody to represent us in the House. We're not doing it one on one. We're not having government by plebiscite. Our elected representatives don't necessarily have to vote in the House according to the wishes of the majority of their constituents on a given issue either. They vote according to their conscience, and sometimes they're influenced a little bit by the position of the party they belong to. They don't carry on a government by plebiscite concept. If we need plebiscites, I think we can have plebiscites. If you feel that's the way you should solve a particular problem, maybe we should be looking at something like the proposition system used in the United States. I think that might solve a lot of the problems where you want the percentage feelings of the general public across the land. But as far as representation I think we have to remember that we're not only representing individuals, we're representing communities, business, industry, hospitals: all these other things. Divide the constituencies up so that it's reasonable for a person to handle an area and represent those people, and I think one can do that much more easily in a fairly uniform urban area than they can in one like this.

MRS. BLACK: So you do feel that there should be other factors that enter into distribution aside from population.

DR. IRWIN: No question. That's our bottom-line point. If I were to make a plug for anything different, I think we might consider a proposition system.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you.

MR. SIGURDSON: You spoke of political power and political clout, and I'm wondering if you would agree with the statement that an Albertan should have pretty much the same equitable clout and power regardless of where they live in Alberta.

DR. IRWIN: I guess it depends what you're talking about.

MR. SIGURDSON: Political clout at the bottom end, so when a vote is cast in the Legislature, that vote is cast with the same equitable clout in the Legislature regardless of where one lives in Alberta.

DR. IRWIN: I think it is now.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Then would you suggest that a constituency that has 31,000 people that has one MLA and one vote is equal to a constituency that has 10,000 people and one vote?

DR. IRWIN: Let's not forget we have a representative system, and we have a party system at the same time. As I mentioned, the MLAs do not necessarily vote according to the majority opinion of their constituents, and they don't always vote according to the position of the party either, although we often see that they do. If you wanted to extrapolate back, you could get a large riding, say 40,000 voters, in which, because you have a number of different candidates running in an election and a lot of people don't show up at the polls, the person who wins and becomes the MLA maybe gets 5,000 votes. Now, he doesn't just represent those 5,000 people, but that's what it took to put him in the Legislature. Some ridings like this one with 9,000 – it's equally possible that MLA could have got 5,000 votes out of that smaller group, you know.

The number of votes available for a candidate to draw upon in an election doesn't mean a thing. The number of people who actually voted for him within that constituency doesn't mean a thing. All that matters is that he gets one more vote than the next closest person. Then he's in. Everybody else is out. In this country a person can get elected to the House with 15 or 20 percent of the votes that could be eligible to be cast. In other ridings, like ours, people go to the polls in a pretty high percentage, and for a smaller group we cast a lot more votes for that member. So I don't see that as a problem. As long as we're going to stick with a party system and a representative system, the fact that one guy gets in the House with 2,000 and another guy gets in the House with 4,000 votes doesn't mean a thing. All that matters is that once he's in there, he represents all the people in his constituency whether he thinks they voted for him or not.

MR. SIGURDSON: That wasn't my question though. The question that I asked was whether or not an Albertan, regardless of where they live in the province, should have the same political clout in the Legislature.

DR. IRWIN: I would hope that every single person in this province, if he has a problem, that problem is taken to the

Legislature by his MLA equally.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? Yes, go ahead.

MR. HUDDLESTUN: May I suggest – we have a hard time hearing the speakers back here. I would like . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you having a hard time hearing the participants or the panel members or both?

MR. HUDDLESTUN: The panel members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks. What I'd asked earlier, possibly before you came in, is to give us a signal, if you would, if you can't hear.

We have four more presenters, and Fred Bradley is going to give a wrap-up presentation, so we're going to take a short, 10-minute coffee break, precisely 10 minutes. So let's take a quick break and stretch, and then get back at it.

[The committee recessed from 2:30 p.m. to 2:36 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'd like to reconvene. Just before we go back into the presentations, Pat Ledgerwood is going to give a brief explanation on the figures, which may help. Go ahead, Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Ladies and gentlemen, we have access to some figures which you may not have in your documentation or in your research. There are 29 rural electoral divisions that are larger in area, square-milewise, than Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. Also, between the 1986 and 1989 general elections you lost 207 electors. And, also, to clarify the redistribution, redistribution is conducted after every second general election. So possibly with those three points in mind, the presentations may go a little faster.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Pat.  
All right. We'll start with Jim.

MR. SHORT: Thank you very much. I'm under some time constraints, so I appreciate being slipped into the speakers list.

I represent the chamber of commerce. However, the chamber of commerce at this time does not have a formal brief to present. I understand we have till February 28 to document something and get it in, which I'm sure we'll do. So any comments I make are simply my own and should not be a reflection of that organization's thinking at this time.

Two items, and perhaps a bit of a twist from what we've heard up to this point. Number one, if it's the intent – and I'm not sure what the intent is overall – to reduce the number of MLAs in the province, then I guess I can say that I'm not against that. Simply from a fiscal responsibility point of view I think we're probably somewhat overburdened in this government with civil servants and so on, and we've got to get the deficit under control. So if it means cutting back on the expense side of things, well, that's good. The other point I'd like to make is in terms of all of the things we've heard about MLAs not being able to adequately represent a larger region. I don't necessarily subscribe to that thinking. My feeling is that an MLA wanting to their job – and I'm sure most of them do – will find the resources to be able to do the job adequately and function successfully in that environment.

Now, what I would like to see maybe considered is that in an urban setting where an MLA has a fairly large population base to look after, perhaps their administrative and resource staff doesn't necessarily have to be as large to look after the concerns of that constituency. But in a setting like perhaps Pincher Creek-Macleod, if that's the way it was to go, with all of the diverse interests and concerns, then perhaps from an economic development point of view it might be better for us to have more representation from the government, as resource people to that MLA, residing in our own areas. I would think that chambers of commerce and economic development people would welcome those residents into the area, and it might in fact enhance rather than diminish their visibility and their accessibility to government. So I don't necessarily see an MLA not being able to function in a larger geographic area, given that his resources maybe are beefed up or improved somewhat. In fact, I do feel that perhaps representation would be improved rather than diminished with that kind of thinking.

So those are my brief comments. I respectfully thank the committee for allowing me to jump in as I did.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Jim. Any questions of Jim?  
Okay. Susan.

MRS. VOGELAAR: Thank you. First of all, I would like to thank the committee for giving the opportunity to present our brief. I'm not going to present a brief, however, and I must tell you that I represent the Progressive Conservative Association in the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest riding. After listening to the presentations already made today, I think to repeat the same statements again would actually be worth while because it points out to you that it is an issue here, that we are concerned about the same things. But I would like to bring up a couple of additional things that I think have come out of the other speeches or other presentations that have been made.

The diversity in our area is something that is perhaps unique to our area. And I'm not saying that the urban MLAs are not busy, that they do not also find that their responsibility is heavy, but I don't think you find waiting in your office during an hour or an hour and a half period people who are concerned with perhaps five or six very different issues, such as agriculture, oil and gas, forestry, mines, environment, recreation. Those are just some of the issues that our MLA has to deal with in this riding, and because of that diversity he would not be able to fulfill the needs of everyone if indeed it were made any larger. He would once more be taking on another responsibility, additional areas that again he would have to be an expert in to be able to represent the people in those areas. I think that is the issue that we really want to drive home here, that it isn't the geographical location, although that definitely is a factor. If any of you have driven to Edmonton – and you people certainly have covered the province – I'm sure you realize that that is an issue. However, I do believe that diversity is the biggest issue here, and I think we have to very carefully look at that issue before we enlarge any of these ridings.

I think again a question that we might ask is: is it working now? Is the system we have in place effective? Is the 41-42 split working for the province of Alberta? And if it is, then why do we have to change it? I think that's where perhaps we should be coming from and, rather than saying, "Well, we need to make a change," be looking at the system and saying, "Well, if it's working, perhaps we don't need to make a change."

Again, too, I would like to stress: how important is rural

Alberta to the government of Alberta? How important is the area that we have outside of the urban population area? What do we provide in rural Alberta that the urban municipalities need? And if those issues are actually as important as we believe they are, then we have to allow for that representation, and I think that's very important as well.

I'd just like to throw in a little story, and I'm going to make this short as well. I was at a meeting, and one of the suggestions which came from an urban representative was the fact that they should increase gas tax, and by increasing gas tax across the province of Alberta, the people in the urban areas would then be forced to use public transportation. That was just a suggestion thrown out, but I think what it did for me was that it made very clear to me that the issues we constantly deal with in the rural areas are not the issues that the urban people are aware of. Go ahead and increase that gas tax, and when I drive my son to the next basketball game that's 60 miles down the road, I'm paying for that extra gas, or when you take your son to the next hockey tournament that's 300 miles away, you're paying an extra tax on that gas as well. Those are the kinds of issues that we have to deal with as rural Albertans, and that's why we're asking for fair representation.

So the bottom line, I think, from our association is that we must look at the diversity. We must look at the responsibility of the MLAs before we consider making a change.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Susan.  
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Susan, for the presentation. Just a question, if you can answer it. Would you agree that if party A runs in an election and gets 55 percent of the vote, it should form the government?

MR. HUDDLESTUN: Can't hear.

MR. SIGURDSON: What I suggested was that if you have a political campaign and you've got a number of parties that run and party A gets 55 percent of the vote throughout the province, should they form a government?

MRS. VOGELAAR: Of course. This is a democracy.

MR. SIGURDSON: That's a democracy. We have a situation right now where theoretically – I believe we had a presentation which showed that given the existing boundaries, we could have party A get 35 percent of the vote and form a government.

MRS. VOGELAAR: Is that correct? Is that just an assumption, or are you looking at facts here?

MR. SIGURDSON: That's the minimum.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He's saying if you look at statistics. There are so many factors that come into play.

MRS. VOGELAAR: That's right. I don't think that's a valid question.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, it happened in Saskatchewan, where the party that formed the government received fewer votes than the party that formed the opposition.

MRS. VOGELAAR: Then perhaps we should go to proportional representation.

MR. SIGURDSON: That's a different argument.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything else, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, that's fine. Thank you.

MR. BRUSEKER: Susan, thank you for your presentation. Just one quick question. We've heard a number of people say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I'm going to go back to the comparison between Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and Chinook. Ballparked, they're the same population, yet Chinook is easily – what? – four times the size of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. We've heard their concern about access to the MLA and the MLA's access to the constituents. I guess my question is simply this: do you think that sort of inequity in terms of areas and populations is fair?

MRS. VOGELAAR: Again I don't want to get into what is fair and what is not fair. I think then we'd have to take a look at that riding and say, okay, what are their interests? What is the diversity, for example, that they are dealing with? What does their MLA have to deal with? Are they involved in coal? Are they involved in oil and gas, agriculture, and all the different interests that our MLA has to deal with? If so, then perhaps we have to look at that as an issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.  
Anyone else? Yes, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Susan, I just wanted to ask you a question similar to the question I asked Dr. Irwin. In the province, as you know, we have to review the boundaries. That's not something we're doing out of choice; our laws say we have to do that. So it's not something any of us really enjoy doing. I agree with you in a lot of ways; don't try and fix something that isn't broken. Anyway, are you saying that possibly there are other factors that have to be considered, as Dr. Irwin did as well, in distribution?

MRS. VOGELAAR: Yes, I think so. And as a member of the Progressive Conservative Association I think we have to look at the Triple E Senate proposal. Again, that is ensuring us as Albertans that despite the lack of population centres here in Alberta, we will have an equal say in the federal government. If you believe in democracy, you can't really sit here and say, "Yes, that's what I'm saying." But there has to be that issue, because you can't totally not look at the rural situation. You have a lot of the resources in the rural areas that the urban people are relying on. Our government has to consider that, and we have to have the choice to have that representation in the House. I think that's very, very important.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?

MR. PATIENCE: I would like to mention something. I'm a town councillor from Fort Macleod, and I would like to point out that should they realign these boundaries as proposed, I wonder if we wouldn't be faced with the same type of regional

disparity situation we're faced with on the federal level. Certainly I would like the committee to consider the fact that we as Albertans should realize that regional disparities exist in that type of a system and that you're in a position to make sure it doesn't happen on the provincial level. Just food for thought.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
All right; Roger.

MR. McADAM: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, and ladies and gentlemen, I've decided to change a little bit of the format of how I was going to talk, simply because a lot of what I wanted to say has been said. This brief basically is presented on behalf of the council members of the MD of Pincher Creek, but I'm responsible for whatever has been written.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Roger, if you want to paraphrase, that's fine. We'll take your written brief and ensure that it's read into the record.\*

MR. McADAM: You bet. Thank you.

First of all, I believe the people of Alberta have manifest the fact that they believe in the Triple E concept. Whether it's senatorial or whatever, they believe in the Triple E concept. I'd like to look at that just for a few minutes.

First of all, under "elected" I think we're lucky that in the province of Alberta the people we elect to represent us are able to go and serve us. There are people who would say that in a true democratic government they would never consider appointing people to a position of power. Fortunately, here in Alberta I think that's our given: elected, we have.

The second thing. As far as "effective" is concerned, I'd like to say that I feel personally that it'd be very difficult for an MLA to be effective in his job if he had to represent more and more jurisdictions, jurisdictions meaning councils, school boards, hospital boards. There must be a limit on them, and I'll refer to that in a couple of minutes under my final comments.

Equal. Under "equal" I believe that representation by population is not synonymous with equal representation, and Canadians from the west, I think, are fully aware of that. I think equality must be measured by a factor of what is fair for all of the people, not what is fair from a point of view of how many voters there are in an area. Because of the fact that the economy of Alberta is based on, let's say, agriculture, oil and gas – and maybe in the future we can look a little bit more towards recreation, towards a possible forest type of industry up north that they're proposing. But because of this fact, I think the economy of Alberta is rural based. As a result, what is fair should be based on the equal representation of rural people with the urban population density concept of representation.

I fully realize that this British Columbia Supreme Court ruling with regard to electoral boundaries has presented concerns with the legality of Alberta's format. Courts are supposed to deal with what is fair. As a result, I'm hoping that in dealing with what is fair, they'll decide, if it goes to court, that changes aren't really necessary, that there should be equal representation between urban and rural as opposed to representation by population. But I guess, in the reality, if it does go to court and electoral boundaries have to be changed . . . It's always easy to oppose change for the sake of saying, "I oppose it," but when you oppose something, I would hope that somebody could

propose something at the same time. In the event that we have to change our electoral boundaries, I wonder if there are some other considerations we could make. I've played with a couple of them, or worked with a couple, I hope.

First of all, look at and limit the number of jurisdictions to whom any one MLA is responsible. Again by jurisdictions I mean the local councils, school boards, hospital boards, and any other major commitments that might occur within that riding. That's the first part of it. The second part: I wonder if rather than looking at the number of persons that an MLA represents, we could look at the density. For example, Mr. Bradley has about 400 square miles of riding and represents approximately 10,000 people. That gives us a density of 2.5 people per square mile. Now, could we perhaps as a province look at a formula that takes the density per square mile and multiplies it, or work with a factor of the number of jurisdictions he's responsible to and come to a number that would say that a person representing this factor number can do an effective job. Because that's what Triple E is about: doing an effective job.

I played with a few figures and tried to find out how you would decide what is an effective size or ratio for an MLA to have to represent. I think you could look at a factor – we'll use Mr. Bradley's riding – of 2.5 people per square mile times the number of jurisdictions he has to take care of. I estimated that as being 11 or 12, meaning school boards, hospital boards, and these things; these are major jurisdictions. You can't just use a linear measurement where you go 2.5 times 11 and get a number, so a factor would have to be worked in where that number may be squared or whatever on the number of jurisdictions. I could see that by using a factor of – well, I won't even give any numbers right now because I've played with lots of numbers. But a formula can be worked out where we'd find out how representative a person could be, how he could represent the people best. Maybe the best way to do that would be to take a riding that is thought to be very effective and then find the density of the riding and multiply it by the factor of how many people he represents. Again going back to the poor people who are in the city, they have, let's say, again 12 jurisdictions, but it's shared by 18 people. Then that factor is reduced so much that – you can see that by multiplying 2.5 times a factor and squaring it and multiplying your density of 3,000 by a factor, we can come up with a number of effectiveness anyway. Now, it'd have to be something you'd play with, and I played with quite a number of numbers before.

Basically, that's what I wanted to say, that yeah, it's easy to say we don't want to see the changes, but if they come, let's at least have some proposals to work with. And maybe this is one little thing you could work with.

Thanks for letting me have this opportunity to speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Roger.  
Questions, panel members?

MRS. BLACK: I have to get in. Roger, I love formulas, and I think they're great because they're self-adjusting . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Speak up please, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: They're self-adjusting as time goes on. I was quite interested in your formula. You're quite right. There are 18 in Calgary to deal with one council, and that's a factor of a formula. Do you think there would be enough factors – we've

heard about diversity, and we've heard about geographical boundaries – that a factoring could be put in place to develop a formula that could be used throughout the province?

MR. McADAM: Well, it's something I presented hoping it was something you could work with. But I think yes, it could happen, because you could by definition have your definitions of what would be a jurisdiction: a school division, a hospital board, a city or town council, a major industrial concern that becomes something that person in that area would have to deal with. I think it could be defined. Again it's figures that you'd have to plug into a formula. If you could find something . . . When you work a formula like that, I think you have to work it backwards. You find out what is effective and then work backwards from it to find out that okay, this person is very effective in his riding; he has a density of 3,020 people per square mile in the riding, and he has this many in his jurisdiction. What number do we come up with there? Then compare the rest to it and try to find out what an effective range would be. A suggestion anyway.

MRS. BLACK: Great. Thank you.

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

MR. PRITCHARD: Perhaps we could have the last two presenters, please, Eldred Lowe and Kay Kerr.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And now Fred will join them to wrap up.  
Kay, would you like to lead off, please.

MRS. KERR: Not particularly, but I'm here.  
Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, will you allow me to read it, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we will; certainly. Go right ahead.

MRS. KERR: A public speaker I am not. Then when it comes to the questions, a debater I am not, so please go easy on me.  
This is on behalf of the Crowsnest Pass Economic Development Board. Rural Alberta consists of many diverse types of economies. Unlike our cities, they predominantly are based on single industry or support economies. This province did not get the wealth which it now enjoys by setting its policies strictly on population. The rural areas in Alberta would all like to share the revenues garnered by the cities from the industry on their boundaries, which you know doesn't happen. The alternative would be to keep track of all the revenues obtained from rural Alberta and keep them exclusively for them; that is, revenues from oil and gas.

I'm going to touch here on the Senate reform thing. Our heritage trust fund, which is accessed by all Albertans, has resulted from revenue from rural Alberta. We have not taken the attitude of what's best for me but rather what's best for Alberta. As Albertans we are fighting for Senate reform because we feel that our wishes are not being addressed. I suggest that you look at the reason for Senate reform and then ask why you want to go to their present system for us in the 1990s. If electoral boundaries are solely based on population, then we will have the situation whereby city members will have the votes to formulate policy for the entire province, which can be expected to favour the cities. You are proposing to give us

the balance in provincial representation which you are fighting for in the federal arena, that of Senate reform to give equal representation to all parts of the country.

The last paragraph I think we can skip because a number of people have handled it. It has to do with the number of councils and school boards and so on that Fred has to look after.

We have taken this up with our board, and our board would like to see us maintain the representation we have with Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, because it's working. We get along well with the Pincher Creek people, and I don't think we would like to see any more dumped on Fred.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Kay. Any questions or comments? Anyone else? Okay. Thanks again, Kay.  
Eldred.

MR. LOWE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the panel, ladies and gentlemen. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this decision-making process of government. The residents of rural Alberta are aware of the discrepancies of population as it relates to representative government. They are also aware of and wish to relate to you some of the other factors to be considered in rural ridings.

At the risk of repetition, the distance to the seat of government, which has been brought up before, creates disadvantages to the MLA. He is not accessible while traveling. Constituents wishing to communicate, at least when it's not accommodated by telephone, must spend a day traveling and a day returning to their homes. In this particular case committees are particularly vulnerable. While in the constituency the MLA has miles to travel to the extremities, which has been mentioned before. To attend the local office of the MLA, several constituents from here must travel several miles as well.

Regional interests vary greatly: ranching to tourism, mining to natural gas. Boundaries require special knowledge. We think there is a special interest here when we're right next door to the British Columbia boundary. We are also very close to the American boundary as well, and I think there are special problems of interest there that maybe our MLA has to accommodate and be aware of. The several boards that he has to keep in touch with have already been mentioned.

We believe the urban and rural representatives should remain at or near the equal number of seats but should be monitored regularly to see if the rural population should initiate policy changes, but not boundary changes. The lack of an upper House in Alberta requires that more emphasis be placed on regional representation.

Thank you very much for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Eldred.  
Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm wondering if I just might have a clarification on policy changes versus boundary changes. Can you just give me a little more detail on that?

MR. LOWE: Well, I'm thinking of some policies that would help to initiate more of the population reverting back to rural Alberta as opposed to something that's just been discussed a while ago.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? All right, Fred. You're the wrap-up presentation.

MR. BRADLEY: Well, first of all, I'd like to thank all the presenters who came here today, representing some very diverse interests in the community and putting forward their views, I think, in a very forthright manner. I'm very proud of the representations that have been made.

I wasn't going to wrap up in the sense of repeating what everyone else said. I thought perhaps I might be able to offer some unique observations as to the diversity of this riding. A number of those have been mentioned. They've been mentioned in terms of the economic activities, which are really livelihood issues of citizens and affect those people quite directly. But to add some other unique things about this riding which perhaps are a little different from others, weather is a difficulty. Last week we had the Crowsnest Pass closed for three days due to weather. So weather conditions can also add to the problems of a representative. It sometimes can take me longer than six hours to get back from Edmonton. Sometimes it takes a full 24 hours to get back to Edmonton because of weather and road conditions. So that's another aspect one should look at.

I think we have a unique situation here. In addition to a number of other things we've mentioned, we have a fairly active arts/cultural community. I believe I'm probably the only rural MLA who represents a symphony orchestra. I'm probably one of the few MLAs, as a single MLA, who does represent a full symphony orchestra. Other symphony orchestras have 17 or 18 members to represent them, but I do represent a symphony orchestra. That talks about the arts and cultural aspect of this community.

We're the playground for southern Alberta also. People from east of us come to the Crowsnest Pass and the Castle River area and the mountain areas for their enjoyment. So that adds to some of the issues.

Others have been mentioned: the environmental issues, water resources issues. Also, we border on an Indian reserve. I do represent part of an Indian reserve, and there are those native cultural issues. We border on Waterton park. Perhaps members don't know, but there is a United Nations biosphere that surrounds Waterton park, which also adds to some of the areas of representation I must make.

I think in terms of Crowsnest Pass, in terms of the historic resources there, there's a greater concentration of historic resources in the Crowsnest Pass than any other single part of the province. Those also take some time in terms of representation.

You mentioned that I do represent five municipal governments. We have a unique municipal government in this riding also, the municipality of Crowsnest Pass, which is an amalgamation of two former towns, two former villages, and nine hamlets. That municipality of Crowsnest Pass is the third largest urban area in the province of Alberta in terms of an urban jurisdiction. Those two towns, two villages, and nine hamlets haven't easily given up their community interests, so they still have distinct community interests which require representation besides representation at the municipal level.

We have ethnic diversity in this riding also. Perhaps other ridings share it, but this one has 33 different nationalities settled in the Crowsnest Pass, each with their unique characteristics, which adds a further dimension. The border constituency issue has been mentioned. Not only are we a long distance from Edmonton; we also border on British Columbia. Believe it or not, about half the working population of the Crowsnest Pass

actually works in British Columbia. That adds a dimension to representation, perhaps, which other members don't have. I have to work on British Columbia workers' compensation cases. I must be familiar with some of the policies of the neighbouring province, the coal mining industry of the neighbouring province and their policies in comparison to Alberta policies. That's something that always takes a considerable amount of time, and it's a factor that should be considered when you look at unique or exceptional circumstances.

So I just wanted to add some new dimensions in terms of representation that add that local flavour to it, and I welcomed very much the representations by others covering a number of other points.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much, Fred.

Questions from the panel of Fred? Anyone else? Any concluding comments by panel members?

Well, on behalf of the panel, then, I'd like to try to summarize what we've heard from you today, and I echo what your MLA said by thanking you again for coming out, taking time to be with us on this very important and challenging issue.

I'll just very quickly go through the list I made as the presenters were forward. The first presenter reminded us of the unique character of the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest constituency, and Fred has covered that so eloquently in his concluding remarks as well. This is a special riding. You do have some very unique characteristics.

The second presenter went on to speak of the severe challenges being faced by, in his words, "our town and our constituency as they face a struggle to maintain a population base." That's something we've heard over and over again as we travel throughout the rural areas, the real concern about the loss of population. I was in seeing my local bank manager about a month ago, and I discovered that we'll probably lose one of our employees because now all the statements in that particular bank are mailed out of Calgary. The information's all sent in to Calgary, it's processed, and they're mailed out. So not only do we lose the work in the bank; we lose the postage in our post office, which is one more factor in the domino effect.

The distance from Edmonton: of course, when we're in the constituency some distance from Edmonton, that's a factor we're going to hear about. We should hear about it, and it is a matter. Travel around the constituency. We heard a request to maintain the current balance of 42 urban, 41 rural constituencies. The Triple E Senate was raised by a number of presenters as an important factor. The number of school boards, hospital boards, municipalities the MLA in the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest constituency must serve was raised as an example.

Then we had an interesting presentation that suggested that we not change the ratio until the decentralization can work. I think the presenter went on to say: give us five to 10 years. We're seeing more lots purchased by people from the cities who are coming here to retire, and to piggyback that on top of what we've heard in some of the other communities, the government should reaffirm its commitment to decentralization and try to get more jobs spread around the province. Again, this is a unique constituency, and the environmental issues over the past 27 years that you've faced . . . Some parts of the province are now discovering the environment. It's been part of your life for a long time.

A really interesting comment was made that because the cities of Calgary and Edmonton are going through this terrific, phenomenal growth, this rapid growth, don't penalize rural

Alberta by taking away our representatives. That came out, I think, as eloquently as we've heard to date. Again, a recommendation that the electoral boundaries should stay as they are. Pincher Creek-Crowsnest is the best example of how diverse a constituency can be.

The next presenter suggested that we may indeed have to reduce the total number of MLAs in the Assembly in addition to seeing a shift from rural to urban, and if that takes place, we should increase the resources for rural members so they can more adequately represent their constituents. The next presenter suggested that the diversity in the area is unique and went from agriculture to oil and gas, forestry, mining, recreation, and the environment. Now, that is unique. That's something very special.

Limit the number of jurisdictions that a member should serve. Look at the density per square mile in the riding. There was again an attempt to develop a formula. One of the things we've appreciated over the last couple of days: we've had several attempts to develop formulas, and we know the difficulty when you do that. You become a target for someone else to aim at, but it also is something more specific that we can examine as a committee.

We must look at the reasons for Senate reform and apply the same to our provincial representation. The point was made so well that we are striving for a Triple E Senate at the national level; let's not forget about the reasons for that and apply the same principle provincially.

Again, a recommendation that the ratio of the seats should stay relatively as they are now, or if there's a shift, it should be very slight.

Then we heard a summation from your MLA, who spoke of the weather, the factor the weather plays, and that sometimes it takes as much as 12 hours to get back to Edmonton if you get one of those unusual storms that can come through the area. Again, that's an important point.

Fred likes to remind us in Edmonton of the symphony orchestra in the Pass, as did his predecessor, I might add. He

went on to mention that this constituency has the greatest concentration of historical resources, and I know the challenges placed on any member in protecting historical resources.

I was interested in the remarks about the unique municipality of the Crowsnest Pass. It's important for all of us to be reminded by you that it is a unique municipality; it's unique because while it brought together towns and villages, those towns and villages want to retain a certain amount of their identity. As has been stated, you now have the third largest municipality in terms of area, which has its own challenges. Again, I wasn't aware – and I'm not sure if my panel members were – of the detailed work that must be done on things like British Columbia workers' compensation matters. But it stands to reason that if you've got a big work force out of your province, you'd have to become aware of those matters.

That's just a summary of some of the key points I tried to glean from those who were presenting briefs to us today. I conclude by thanking you again for coming out and sharing your ideas with us.

We have hearings next week in communities like Saint Paul and Viking. We're then on to Slave Lake, Donnelly, Fort McMurray, Wainwright, and Hanna. So we're trying to conclude this portion of our work so we can sit down and begin to see what conclusions we can draw and what recommendations can be made back to the Assembly. Your input today was certainly helpful.

I might just add that we all have good memories but we find they're getting shorter with the workload. We've got everything on our computer discs so we can pull out minute information. We can go back and look at recommendations that were given. We can break down briefs and see where there are similarities with other briefs, and that's going to be helpful in the process too.

So I'll conclude by again thanking you for coming out and wishing you well.

[The committee adjourned at 3:19 p.m.]