

[Acting Vice-Chairman: Mrs. Black]

[2:01 p.m.]

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome you to Slave Lake and to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. As you probably can see, we have microphones along the top of the table here. Basically, all of our meetings are being recorded by *Hansard* for future reference and so that we can distribute the basis of our meetings to the public at large if requested. These are the people over here from *Hansard*, and they will be recording this afternoon. Before we start, I'm not the normal chairman, but I've been asked to sit in today for Bob Bogle. He's been waylaid in a snowstorm or something down in Milk River, so he wasn't able to join us today.

I'd like to start off by introducing our committee members, and I'll start on my far right. We have Frank Bruseker, the MLA for Calgary-North West. He's a member of the Liberal Party. Next to Frank is Mike Cardinal, and he's the Conservative Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. Over on the far end we have Bob Pritchard. He's our senior administrator for the committee. Next to Bob is Pat Ledgerwood. He's the Chief Electoral Officer for Alberta. Immediately on my left we have Tom Sigurdson. He's the MLA for Edmonton-Belmont. We have at the back Robin Wortman. He's our hearings coordinator, and if anything goes wrong, it's either Bob's or Robin's fault. Over at our *Hansard* table we have Gary Garrison and Doug Jeneroux. Next to me we're delighted that we have the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake, Pearl Calahasen, one of our female colleagues in the House, and we welcome you, Pearl. We've made it a custom that if we're in a riding, we invite the MLA to join us and participate or just hear the presentations as they come in. So welcome, Pearl. We're delighted you're here.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Before we start, some people are wondering what our committee is all about and why we are here. I've asked Pat Ledgerwood if he would give a little bit of a brief background as to the events that evolved that really called for us to have a committee struck. I'd ask Pat to take over at this point.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Pat. The boundaries commissions in Alberta are normally struck after every second general election. Our last commission was struck in 1983-84 after the 1982 general election. We had an election in 1986 and again in '89, so normally the first session after the second general election - that is, after the 1989 general election - we would have had a commission struck. However, because of a situation that developed in British Columbia, the three House leaders of the government, the NDP, and the Liberals got together and wanted to review exactly the parameters that should be used in setting up a commission.

Now, the situation in British Columbia was that they had a low of under 5,600 population in one riding and over 68,000 in another riding. There was a commission struck called the Fisher commission. The Fisher commission looked at the situation in British Columbia. They came up with basically three recommendations: that they eliminate the dual-member ridings, that they increase the number of members of the Legislature from 69 to 75, and also that they get rid of the wide difference in numbers that the MLAs represented. So they took the population of

British Columbia, divided it by 75, came up with an average, and then said that all of the electoral divisions should fall within plus or minus 25 percent of that average.

The British Columbia government was a little slow reacting in the eyes of a Professor Dixon, so he brought the matter to the court. The case was heard before Chief Justice Madam McLachlin, and at that time she basically relied on the Charter to say that each and every elector should have an equal vote. She supported the Fisher commission and supported the average plus or minus 25 percent and said it was up to the Legislature to implement the court's rulings. There was no appeal to the McLachlin decision. Incidentally, Justice McLachlin has been promoted to the Supreme Court of Canada, and she's one of our nine justices sitting there.

Professor Dixon wasn't happy that the B.C. government didn't react to this, and he brought it back to court again. It was heard by Justice Meredith, and what Justice Meredith basically said was that the court was not the government and they would not dissolve the House or set up some election procedures. But they recommended the government get on with a boundaries commission. A commission was struck, and they tabled their report on January 15 of this year, and the new boundaries came into effect at the end of January. They established 75 seats, and the average number of the population is within 25 percent above or below the average.

So that will give you a little background on why the Alberta government didn't establish a commission at the first session and has established this committee, which is traveling throughout the province to hear from the electors on just what their views are. Then the committee will table their report, and the government will react to their report.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pat. As our custom has been, we normally go through a little slide presentation to give some background as to some of the findings and the tabulations that we've put together. A lot of them are in the packages that you've received, but we do have some new slides, and quite often it's a vehicle for opening up discussion. So I'd ask Frank Bruseker if he would lead us through the slides.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. The slides that we're going to go through, the first part of them anyway, are the same as the package which you have probably received at some point in time, the letter entitled "Dear Albertan." The first list that you see before you is simply a list alphabetically of the 83 constituencies that we have in the province of Alberta currently. The number to the left is simply the electoral divisions. There's an asterisk beside some of them. They are the electoral divisions that do not fall within the current parameters plus or minus 25 percent, and the number on the right is the number of eligible voters. We'll talk a little bit more about the impact on that in just a moment.

The second list is again the 83 constituencies. This time the sequence is a little bit different. They are sequenced from the largest constituency, largest being based upon population, down to the smallest constituency, based again upon population, which would be the constituency of Cardston. Now, Cardston is a bit of an anomaly in that there are 1,800 members, more or less at any rate, who are eligible voters of the Blood Indian Band who chose not to be enumerated during the last enumeration. So although they could vote and perhaps did vote, they chose not to be enumerated, and their numbers should perhaps be added

to that Cardston population. Nonetheless, it is substantially smaller than most of the others.

If you took a total of all of those numbers which you saw in the last two slides and added them together, you would find the total to be approximately 1.5 million voters in the province of Alberta, based upon the last enumeration. Currently we have 83 electoral divisions. If you divide the 1.5 million voters by 83, you get the average figure of 18,685. Now, based upon the 25 percent rule, if you can call it that, that Mr. Ledgerwood spoke of earlier that came out of the British Columbia decision, the impact of that means that the upper acceptable limit of range would be 23,356 and the lower end of a minus 25 percent would be 14,014 voters per constituency. So the acceptable range would vary between 14,000 and 23,000.

So highlighting with colour on that list that you saw earlier those which would fall outside of that 25 percent rule, we have two groups. The group which is highlighted in green is a group of constituencies all of which are urban and all of which are more than 25 percent above the variation, which means they're larger than 23,000. The ones that are in pink are all rural. They're all more than 25 percent below the mean, which means less than 14,000.

Shown graphically on the map that you see before you with all of the pink-coloured constituencies are those constituencies which currently are below the 25 percent variation. Again, you can see that they are all rural constituencies. There are two small green dots, and they may be difficult to pick out. One of them is the city of St. Albert just to the north and west of Edmonton, and the other one in the southeast corner of the province is the city of Medicine Hat.

Within the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, coming up in just a moment, there are some constituencies which also are above the 25 percent variation. For the most part, in both cities, as you'll see, the constituencies that are above the 25 percent are those which are on the periphery or in the growing portions of the city. This is the city of Calgary. The next slide is the city of Edmonton. Again, you'll see some constituencies coloured in green, which are again for the most part on the boundaries of the city.

This is the city of Lethbridge. It currently has two constituencies, and currently both of those constituencies fall within the 25 percent rule.

This is the city of Medicine Hat, quite large. Currently, by eligible voter lists, this is the fourth largest constituency in the province and, therefore, is coloured in green: one constituency.

Now, Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South are a little bit unusual compared to most of the other constituencies around the province. The black line around the outside of this shows the current boundaries of Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South. The brown line is actually the boundary of the city of Red Deer proper. At the last redistribution, Red Deer was at that point wherein it needed to be subdivided into two, but the city by itself did not have enough population to justify two constituencies. In order to address that problem, the commission that created the new boundaries added a piece of rural area; in fact, it took Red Deer county and added a piece of Red Deer county to each of the constituencies. So these two constituencies, therefore, are primarily urban but also contain a piece of rural Red Deer county and, therefore, are unique in the province.

This is the city of St. Albert: again, a very large constituency of over the 25 percent variation.

Now, we did a little further analysis and looked at those constituencies which we felt were quite small in number, and

these are highlighted in the purple colour which you see before you on this map. The purple colour in this case indicates those constituencies which are more than 35 percent below the average. In terms of numbers it means 12,000 electors or less per constituency. And we found there were still some that were even smaller; you'll see there are five constituencies here coloured in yellow. Those are 50 percent less than the average figure, which means less than 10,000 voters per constituency.

The blue dots on this particular map indicate the areas where the committee has gone or is going. There is a dot there that you may be able to pick out for the Slave Lake constituency, which of course is where we are today. Later on this evening we will be heading up to Fort McMurray to speak with people in that constituency as well. We've had tremendous turnouts.

This is just a list of the places we have been. In fact, we've had to add a few down at the bottom of the list because we've had such a tremendous turnout in some areas, particularly in those constituencies which were highlighted in purple on a previous map. We had a very strong turnout and a request to go back again, and in fact we are doing that.

This particular slide shows the combined slides that you saw earlier of the purple-coloured constituencies, again representing fairly small constituencies more than 35 percent away from the mean; the green dots show our location. You can see that what we've attempted to do is to go into those areas which are most likely going to be affected and allow those people to have as much input as possible into the redistribution process.

Now, in the province of Alberta our current boundaries up until this most recent election are based upon enumeration. What that means is those people who are eligible to vote in an election. What we have found in some other jurisdictions, however, is that some jurisdictions such as British Columbia base their redistribution figures not upon simply enumeration but upon the total census figures. Now, the difference is simply this. Total census includes, first of all, that very large portion of the population which is below the age of 18. As MLAs we represent all of our constituents, not just those who voted for us. It also would add on those figures of people who are landed immigrants and do not have Canadian citizenship and, therefore, technically cannot vote but nonetheless are members of our constituencies. So, based upon figures for the total population, we end up with a substantially larger figure of approximately 2.4 million. Doing the same kind of numbers as what we did before, if you divide that by 83, therefore you get an average constituency being 28,504 in population. Applying the 25 percent variation figure to that 28,000, 25 percent more gets us to a maximum acceptable size, based upon population now, of 35,600 and a minimum population size of 21,300.

Now, if we apply those numbers in the same kind of fashion, it has a bit of an impact that is significant. Again, this slide looks very similar, if you look at it briefly, to one that we showed you before, but it is significantly different. Again we have a green portion. Those are still more than 25 percent away from the average, but this particular list only has 18 constituencies. The first slide that we showed you like this that had a green portion in fact had 19 constituencies that were over the 25 percent. Similarly, at the bottom end there is the pink zone, if you will. This particular pink zone - if you count them, you'll find there are 22 constituencies in that pink zone based upon population. The previous slide that we showed you like this had 24 that were too small based upon the electors lists. So for the ones that are not coloured now, we have 43 that fall within the guidelines of a plus or minus 25 percent, whereas before we only

had 40. The implication, therefore, is that if any changes were to be made based upon population, they might not need to be as radical changes as what might have to happen under the eligible voters lists.

Now, the series of slides we're going to show you right now are the same sequence, using population figures, as what we've shown you before. Something that is really unique again: here we have the pink-coloured constituencies, those being less than 25 percent, but now when we use the population figures, you can see that the constituency of Fort McMurray in the northeast corner of the province and Grande Prairie over on the western side are actually coloured green, indicating that based upon their population, they are more than 25 percent away from the mean; in other words, more than 35,000 voters. It's now, only using population, that we finally get two primarily rural constituencies that are, in fact, over the 25 percent rule. In the city of Calgary, again, we have some constituencies coloured in green. What I can suggest here is we lose three constituencies that were previously over the 25 percent and we gain one, for a net loss of two constituencies that are above the suggested guidelines. The same thing occurs in the city of Edmonton. Again there are some that we gain and some that we lose, for a net of one, I believe, improvement.

Now, here is something that is quite substantial. Again the purple colour indicates those constituencies which are more than 35 percent away from the mean. On the first slide we showed you, there were 16 constituencies that were more than 35 percent away from the average figure, using the eligible voters list. When we use population and we look at the 35 percent variation, we now only have 12 constituencies. So it's a substantial improvement when we use the population figures. Here it becomes very significant. Before, when we used eligible voters, we had five constituencies which in fact were below the 50 percent. When we use population figures, we only have one constituency left, which is the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest in the very southwest corner of the province.

That is the last slide we have to show you. The first batch used eligible voters. Then this second set looked at the total population census figures. Are there any questions you have of me or any of the other members of the panel that I didn't explain carefully enough?

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Frank.

Our format has usually been very informal, and we'd like to keep it that way. I was wondering: would you all like to move up to the table here? You seem quite far away from us. Can you just move some chairs up, Robin, and have everybody come up to the table, please?

One thing I think we have to just reaffirm with you is that our committee was struck by and we are members of all three parties within the House. We are governed under legislation that requires us to review the boundaries after every second year. As Mr. Ledgerwood explained to you, there was a case in British Columbia which gave all of our parties concern. We were gathered together and sent from our various caucuses to form this special committee to review the legislation not only in Alberta but the legislation in British Columbia. We want to make it perfectly clear that we are not the commission that will be drawing out boundary lines, et cetera. We are a committee that will report to the Legislature the findings we have gathered and assimilated from our road trip. You can see we've been all over the province. Then hopefully there'll be some concrete

guidelines that will be established by the Legislature so a commission can be formed and then carry on from that point.

I think I can speak for all the committee members. We feel very strongly about this: that one of our recommendations as a committee will be that once the commission is struck, they will again consult with the people of the province and revisit many of the areas, some that we have been to and others that we weren't able to make it to. So that's one of our recommendations. Does anyone have anything further to add?

Anyway, maybe what we could do is start off with Irene. If you'd like to make your presentation, Irene.

MRS. SALISBURY: I got to be first even if I did wait to have somebody else sign up.

Madam Chairman, members of the select special committee, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the town of High Prairie I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns regarding the present study on Alberta electoral boundaries. The thrust of our submission is for effective representation. We feel that this is more important than representation by population. There are significant differences between rural and urban ridings, and of prime importance is the geographic difference. Our MLA, Pearl, must travel hundreds of kilometres each day to serve the needs of this constituency. If our riding was to increase in size to equalize the population ratio, the ability to effectively represent the constituency would be reduced, because any increase in the size of a constituency creates an additional deterrent to effective service by adding both population and distance. For instance, the disposition of a parcel of land north of Red Earth wouldn't cause a ripple in Edmonton. However, to local residents it could mean the end of a way of life that they have known for generations.

In a much smaller constituency a minor problem is even likely to become a public issue due to the ease of communication. But in the larger northern constituencies issues that are major in one locale may even go unnoticed in another due to the distance separating them and the lack of effective communication, because when residents in an isolated northern community meet to discuss their problem, it's highly unlikely that the media would be in attendance. Therefore, the public awareness possible in more densely populated areas is not achieved. Again, northerners have little voice. For this reason the access of the people to their elected representative is perhaps even more critical than elsewhere.

In the select special committee's report option 1 is based on current legislation and historical Alberta practice. The redistribution rule of 42 urban and 41 rural divisions has worked well for a number of years. At present, with the 63 percent of eligible voters classified as urban and 37 percent as rural, it is our view that rural representation must not be lessened. We ask the committee: how could you implement a system in Alberta where the interests of the regional minority are not protected while at this very time our provincial government is fighting for Senate reform at a federal level?

Northern Alberta is rich in natural resources. Ninety percent of all surface water in the province is in the north. The majority of forest resources, the bulk of oil and gas exploration and future production are in the north. Virtually all of the commercial fishing and trapping are in the northern half of the province. But northern residents already feel powerless and isolated from the processes that determine the use of the resources and the future of the land on which they live. The life-styles of many of these people are tied to the natural environment that is con-

stantly threatened by economic expansion.

These people deserve a strong voice in the decisions that are vital to their existence. These cannot be achieved by reducing their political representation. Even now the entire northern half of the province is represented by only nine elected members, very few voices to speak for such a vast and vulnerable area. If, as indicated in the second option, the boundaries are changed to accommodate the 25 percent factor, it would distort the historical urban/rural balance, and if that happens, the possibility could exist for the majority to impose their wishes on the minority. For example, it would not be fair or just if the people of Edmonton or Calgary decided that a pulp mill should or should not be built in Slave Lake, without considering the wishes of rural Albertans who would be most affected by the project.

Because of the distances involved, the allocation of provincial grants through such programs as the municipal recreation areas program cannot serve an entire northern constituency as it would the smaller constituencies elsewhere. A grant for a \$100,000 project in Edmonton-Whitemud could provide a facility accessible to all constituents, whereas the same facility in Lesser Slave Lake would be virtually inaccessible to all those northern residents beyond a 50 or 60 kilometre radius. Furthermore, in the north there are fewer alternatives for those unable to access such facilities. If northern constituencies were any larger, it would further reduce the accessibility of such facilities and services to the residents.

Determining electoral boundaries should also take into account that urban MLAs have the advantage of providing a common front on issues in a particular urban centre common to all the MLAs representing that area. But for rural MLAs there is often very little opportunity for this common front to form, because most often the MLAs in rural ridings can only provide representation as an individual because the issue is unique to that constituency.

To summarize, there are a number of factors other than population equality to be considered when establishing boundaries, such as the historical and regional claims for effective representation, sparsity or density of population, accessibility, and the special interests of the people within the constituency. So, in conclusion, Madam Chairman, we would ask this committee to uphold option 1 by maintaining the urban/rural balance that allows for effective representation for all.

Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Irene.

Are there any questions from committee members? Tom, would you like to start off?

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back. The courts in British Columbia have more or less told us that there has to be representation by population. Because it's not been challenged, that has set a precedent, and that's what we have to deal with.

You talk of two areas of concern. One is to effectively represent a constituency, which you feel would be reduced if size were increased. The other area, given the guidelines that some of us feel we have imposed upon us by the court decision, is that there has to be representation by population to a greater degree than what there currently is, at least. As you point out, we have almost a 50-50 split between rural and urban voting divisions: 63 percent residing in urban Alberta, 37 percent in rural Alberta. If you were only given the one choice, would your choice be to

increase the number of urban members or increase the size of rural constituencies?

MRS. SALISBURY: If you increase the size of the rural, that would reduce the numbers of them, which would automatically increase the urban. Is that not true?

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. But you could increase the number of urban members without increasing the geographical size of the rural constituencies.

MRS. SALISBURY: I think the difficulty, particularly in this constituency - the lesser of two evils would be to keep the rural constituencies no larger than they are because of the difficulties of travel, particularly, as I say, in Lesser Slave Lake, with the lake in the middle. Having to go from point A to point C up here, you can't go across the lake; you have to go around or back again and then up this way. You know, it makes it very difficult. Then to go from there into Edmonton and back, I know the incredible miles, and particularly when we get this type of weather. For any MLA in this area it makes it extremely difficult to effectively reach the people.

I feel that our MLA now is doing an exceptional job. Saying nothing of past MLAs, she appears to be making a special attempt to reach . . . And I know the number of kilometres is just incredible. To make it any larger, unless there were some other way for additional help for MLAs, I don't know any way they can do it. I know Mr. Adair has a similar problem as well, but at least he can fly in and out. Well, you can fly into Slave Lake, but then you'd have to have a vehicle at this end. These are the things that I think make this particular riding even more difficult to get around than some of the others.

MR. SIGURDSON: Good. Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions? Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I have just a quick question and a comment, I guess, in a way. It was mentioned that if we use the 25 percent variance and if we go beyond that a bit, the court system may come in to determine how things should be settled in the future. How would people in the High Prairie region, for an example, react if we get to the point that we are governed by the court system rather than the politicians you elect? Because that's basically what's been suggested in B.C. If we don't behave ourselves, the courts are going to tell us how to govern our provinces. How would your people react to that?

MRS. SALISBURY: Mr. Cardinal, really, from what I read of that report in B.C., I felt that the court said it was not their place to legislate. I think the court would step in only if the ruling government refused to do anything. But I believe the ultimate solution will lie with the Legislature. They are there to govern us, to legislate. I do not believe it will come to the time when the courts are going to make the decision for the legislators.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions?

Thank you very much, Irene.

MR. JENKINS: Excuse me, Madam Chairman. I have a

question. Regarding the matter before the courts in B.C., what jurisdiction does this have over Alberta, or is this just used as a reference?

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Justice McLachlin – this was a B.C. ruling – was in the courts in British Columbia when the ruling came down. Are you aware of the ruling at all, the 25 percent variance?

MR. JENKINS: Yes.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Oh. Justice McLachlin has now gone to the Supreme Court of Canada, so the concern is that if there were ever a Charter challenge and it went to the Supreme Court, in all likelihood Justice McLachlin would hear the case and we could be faced with a problem. Now, that's only "could be." The jurisdiction, in fact, is in British Columbia, but I suppose it would be more of a . . . [interjection] Beg your pardon?

MR. SIGURDSON: It has set precedents though.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Yes. It has set precedents within the provincial jurisdiction of British Columbia. Now, oddly enough the Legislature in British Columbia did not challenge or appeal the judgment. It went unappealed. Of course, the time frame for appeal has passed, so we would not be able to do that; they would only be able to do it. So it's left some concern, and we have to have something in place that could – only could – stand up to a Charter challenge. So that's the concern.

Denise.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: My name is Denise Wahlstrom. I'm the regional vice-president for the northwest, and I'm with the Alberta Liberal Party.

Members of the committee, other presenters here, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the question of electoral boundaries and how Albertans may best be represented by their Members of the Legislative Assembly, and I also appreciate the opportunity to make this presentation in my own constituency.

Fair and effective representation. The challenge I think we face today is to define what is meant by representation, a definition that is not only fair and perceived to be fair but also a definition that is effective and considers the interests of all Albertans. The term "representation" as it has developed in our western democratic societies has meant many things. As we developed the idea that ordinary people could have some say in how they would be governed, only men with property could exercise their right to vote. We then moved to the idea that all men could vote. Finally, in the early 20th century, we moved toward the idea that women could also exercise their right to vote. In Canada it wasn't until the early 1960s that aboriginal peoples with treaty rights were given the right to vote.

Fair representation, then, to me suggests that population, not electors, should be the guiding principle within the 25 percent factor. The decisions we make today will have a tremendous impact on all our constituents, especially our young people. The federal government already functions under the principle of representation by population. The elector count reflected in your letter would not reflect an accurate or fair count of electors in the province of Alberta. An updated population count would be

required before a reorganization of boundaries could take place. Population rather than electors would best represent the concept of fair representation.

Northern Alberta contains the largest constituencies in the province. Together the eight most northerly constituencies comprise more than one-half the area of Alberta, with a representation of only 10 percent in the Legislative Assembly. Based on the last elector count, four of the eight constituencies would not fall within the parameters of the 25 percent factor. If our representation is eroded, how does the province propose to address the issue of effective representation, and how might our regional interests be addressed constructively?

I've just listed some of the concerns I have, geography being one of them. The sheer size of northern Alberta would reduce the effectiveness of the MLAs to understand and represent the needs of their constituents. Time spent on the road to various points in the constituency reduces time available for constituents. Considering that many of the roads in northern Alberta are not up to pavement standards also has an impact on time management and effective representation. When one considers the disproportionately large contribution made by northern Alberta to natural resources, in particular timber and natural gas products, perhaps more consideration is needed for the residents of these areas.

Economic Diversity. In all northern constituencies MLAs must deal with matters relating to all natural resources and other related industries including the agricultural sector. As we approach the 21st century, the environment and protection of resources such as water will require much commitment and extensive communication on the part of our elected representatives.

Political units. In northern Alberta members of the Legislature must communicate with several towns, Metis settlement councils, and band councils. In the Lesser Slave Lake area this would total close to 15 different political units.

Organizations. Many of these in our communities also require dialogue with their representatives. I just wanted to list them, but I don't need to mention them at this point. This list represents only a small sample of the various interest groups in our region. When we take into consideration our geography and our diversity, can our representatives in the provincial Legislative Assembly effectively and fairly represent the concerns of northern Albertans?

Other considerations: regional interests. As westerners many of us have come to believe that our regional interests have not been given due consideration in Ottawa. Our provincial government, with the support of Albertans, has strongly supported the concept of a Triple E Senate to address the issue of regional representation. In northern Alberta we, too, feel that many of our regional interests are not understood and therefore are not being addressed by the provincial government. How does the government propose to address the problem of regionalism?

Another item of consideration is composition of the commission. The commission must be nonpartisan and should represent a fair cross section of Alberta geographically and economically, and an appropriate balance of representation from urban and rural is also important.

I thank you for the opportunity to present my views on the issue of regional boundaries.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Denise.

Are there any questions from the committee? Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. Thanks, Denise. I appreciate your presentation. It was very well thought out. I wasn't aware that 50 percent of the area had 10 percent of the representation, so it's an interesting statistic.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: I think it was more than 50, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Is that right?

I wanted to put a question to you, Denise. That's a shocking statistic. Would extra money for the MLA in Slave Lake to have an extra - like, everybody gets one constituency office. Would money to have an extra one or even an extra two and a staff person in there facilitate the process for effective representation?

MRS. WAHLSTROM: Well, I think an MLA, especially if you don't have an MLA that is a cabinet minister, would not receive the same access to a qualified executive assistant that a cabinet minister would. I would think that having funds to have at least three offices in some of the main areas - like, I don't think Pearl has the funds to do that in this constituency. You also need to handle all the concerns you get, the diversity of concerns. You would certainly need, I would think, a very highly qualified EA to help you out in those areas, which I don't think they have access to at this point and money to set up those offices, which would be a way to address that if you had to resort to reducing the boundaries.

MR. BRUSEKER: That would have to come under Members' Services.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: But just . . . Oh, go ahead.

MR. BRUSEKER: You wanted to finish your point? I had another question.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: Just one other point, and I was going to present it in here. When you take the averages of the eight constituencies, one other consideration may be to view areas of the province as a regional area and the average of those constituencies must be within the 25 percent factor. I do agree with that to a point. So if you took the average of the eight in terms of electors, I believe the average was 15,000. If you took the average of population, of course it goes up because there are a lot of young people in northern Alberta. So for the purposes of representation by population, we could say this region has the average within the 25 percent factor. Because how do you split up the city of Fort McMurray? It doesn't make sense. So for effective and fair representation, that northern area as a region still has the representation they need, but it may be divided up differently because of access to roads and because of the sparsely populated areas. It doesn't make sense to take 5,000 out of Fort McMurray and put them in Athabasca. It just doesn't make sense.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you.

On your last page you have a sentence that I just wanted to touch on a little. You said, "An appropriate balance of representation from urban and rural." I presume there you're talking about total number of urban MLAs versus rural MLAs. I wonder if you might just want to talk about what you feel is an appropriate balance there.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: Well, when I say "appropriate," I still feel that certainly the principle of representation by population is important and significant. Whether it's the 25 percent factor, I don't know. That was the court ruling in B.C. Nobody challenged it. And regardless of even what your decision is here or the commission's decision in the Legislature, that can be challenged by any individual in the courts. So you know, we understand that any decision that is made can be challenged. But I leave it up to the commission, in view of our presentations and our concerns, to come up with something that they would deem to be fair. What exactly it is . . . Like, when I looked at the map, when you take population, maybe you can go within the 35. Maybe that is appropriate. Maybe other people in urban areas don't see that as being appropriate, but I do, given the size of our constituencies.

MR. BRUSEKER: Currently the distribution in the Legislature is pretty close to 50-50 in terms of urban/rural, and the population is about 60-40. Are you saying, therefore, that the MLA split should reflect more the population split rather than the 50-50 we have right now?

MRS. WAHLSTROM: Well, to be honest, I certainly can't help but believe that. But when we look at the size of our constituencies and how effective our sitting MLA can be, it's really difficult to see that without some other help it just simply wouldn't be effective. One way to answer that would be to view areas in our provinces as regions. In northern Alberta it certainly would fit that, because there's only one road that goes up in certain areas. How can you put it with another constituency when there's no access? It's not logical.

MR. BRUSEKER: Good. Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Denise. Are there any other questions? Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Just a quick comment possibly. I don't know how many questions I have. I have to commend Denise for the presentation she's done. I think that's what we tend to hear across rural northern Alberta, that there are regional disparities, and you've outlined them very well. Although that might not be in the best interests of your party at this time, you've come out honestly and squarely.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: Well, as a northern Albertan, I feel that we're first at this point.

MR. CARDINAL: I commend you for that. That's a fine job.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Denise, would I be correct in putting the assumption forward that you believe the party that receives the most votes in a general election should form the government?

MRS. WAHLSTROM: Now you're talking about going by vote and, like, preferential ballot?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, not a preferential ballot. The existing kind of ballot we have today. But if they had more votes, then . . .

MRS. WAHLSTROM: Right. Which leads to the question of: you can, in fact, have more votes and lose the election in a redistribution. Yes. Fortunately, it's always worked the right way. Yeah, you would have to say that.

MR. SIGURDSON: But if one were to go into regions such as . . . I think part of the problem I have with the thesis is that if you go by regions, then I think you're also saying that to take the existing number of constituencies, put them into a region, and then divide the region . . .

MRS. WAHLSTROM: No, I wasn't really saying that.

MR. SIGURDSON: You're not suggesting that. Okay.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: In northern Alberta, because of the way our population is distributed, we've got mainly two cities: Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie. Now, the population of the city of Fort McMurray is - what? - 22,000, whatever. But that constituency is already more or less over the factor. That constituency has a lot of population. But how do you logically take some people out of the city of Fort McMurray and put them into another constituency that has less population to even them out in terms of representation? It's just not logical to do that. So if you view northern Alberta as a region, they do all fit within that factor. It's just that maybe one constituency has one or two thousand less than Grande Prairie, which has 5,000 more. But as an area, they are not overly represented.

MR. SIGURDSON: But you're suggesting, though, that we take the existing number of constituencies in a region and . . .

MRS. WAHLSTROM: I'm saying it could be considered, but I didn't consider the problems and logistics of what you might encounter in the city of Edmonton or Calgary. It was just something I would like you to consider, but I certainly didn't have the time or the statistics to do a complete review of what that might entail or the problems it would encounter.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions?

Thank you very much, Denise. We really enjoyed your presentation.
Peter.

MR. MOORE: Firstly, welcome to the town of Slave Lake, and please consider that you've got an open invitation to return not only on official business. Even you, Mike, are welcome back.

MR. CARDINAL: I'll consider it.

MR. MOORE: Mike and I have known each other for about 20 years and we always continue to banter back and forth. I hope that's not on tape, is it? I suppose.

Madam Chairman, members of the committee, the town of Slave Lake appreciates this opportunity to provide input on this very important matter of provincial constituency boundaries. We believe that the decisions of your committee should be framed on the principle of effective, efficient, and fair representative government. This principle appears broader than that used by the Supreme Court of British Columbia but will, we believe, be

supported by the vast majority of Albertans when applied with common sense. Applying this principle involves wisdom and balancing, since effectiveness, efficiency, and representation will be pulling in different directions when looking at certain specific situations.

First, effectiveness. MLAs have a primary responsibility to meet, dialogue, and understand the needs of their constituents in order to reflect this in provincial policy-making. Despite improved communication means, distance within a constituency and from Edmonton to the constituency does impact effectiveness and must be acknowledged in boundary setting. If a rural MLA spends 25 percent of her time on the road in her constituency and to and from the Legislature and will really only interface with one-half as many people per visit due to the size of individual communities compared to urban MLAs, that does have an effect on an MLA's effectiveness and needs to be considered when establishing constituency size besides both population and area.

Secondly, efficiency. Improved staff resources for MLAs and new communication opportunities are helping MLAs to be more time-efficient despite the challenge of living in a complex world. The cost of government is an ever important concern of the people. As our population grows, so do the many tools available to the MLAs that will make them more efficient and effective. We believe a total of 83 MLAs can remain the same, thereby providing cost efficiencies.

Thirdly, fair representation. As the attached statistics show - this is a separate page at the back, an appendix - in Alberta the range of differences in population per constituency is substantially less than for electors per constituency. In particular, rural areas have larger families with electors versus non-electors. Population, not electors, should be the basis of fair representation within a plus or minus 25 percent principle. As we enter the 21st century, the decisions we make on environment, government finance, and many other areas will have a greater impact on our nonvoting children than ever before. Fair representation also means being able to sit down with other constituents and dialogue as equals, not as a newcomer or as an old-timer, et cetera. Adjusting electoral boundaries will disrupt a sense of equality and common community set by the previous boundaries and should be done carefully to prevent creating longer term settings of unequal representation.

The town of Slave Lake encourages all provincial electoral boundary reviews to be undertaken under the guidance of the principles of effectiveness, efficiency, and fair representation. We have explained what these principles mean to us and have confidence that Alberta residents will show overwhelming support if these principles are wisely applied. We ask that as specified proposed boundary amendments are developed using these principles, elected municipal officials be consulted and invited to comment.

Thank you very much. If you have any questions, I'll certainly try to answer them.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions? Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. Peter, I appreciate your presentation and the number-crunching you've done to give us a little bit of statistical information as well. Sort of the same question I asked earlier that I would ask of you is simply this: currently we have about a 50-50 split in terms of urban versus rural MLAs and a 60-40 split in terms of urban versus rural population. Do you

believe the representation, the number of MLAs, should more closely reflect the 60-40 split in terms of population than it does now?

MR. MOORE: Yes, I think we do. It's one we had some difficulty with, because whether you look within the Alberta context or within the constituency, a larger community then has the possibility to dictate to other smaller communities or other areas in the province or the constituency. That's an area that certainly concerns us greatly. But the principle of one man, one vote I think is primary, and we have to live with that.

Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. I have a question regarding your last paragraph on consulting with municipal authorities. I think you are aware that there are over 400 separate municipal entities in Alberta. This doesn't include school boards, hospital boards, or irrigation districts. I'm talking about elected representatives. Also, on Denise's proposal, she was saying that we shouldn't use the current numbers; we should update the numbers. The next census will be conducted in 1991. Those figures won't be available until early 1992. So we start off in 1992 with a commission to try and establish boundaries and have them ready for an enumeration in the fall of 1992. We have to have those boundaries available to the political entities by the end of May. How do you propose a commission in the four or five months available gets all that information and co-ordinates it with 400 separate municipal entities, each with their own specific desires of building the new electoral division around our area? I'm just wondering if you could give me an idea how you feel we could co-ordinate that.

MR. MOORE: Well, I can certainly live with the census, knowing the delay. But I think there are two points. One is that municipal government is now pressing more and more to be recognized as a level of government, and that's a question within not just Alberta but all of Canada. So there's a principle there. I think the town of Slave Lake feels like most other municipalities, that we are a legitimate form of government and have a role to play in what may appear to be strictly a provincial issue such as this one. So I think we feel we have a right to speak to the question. Second, in terms of the logistics or how you do it, I think we're probably fairly confident through our association that that would be an effective voice or an effective tool for the provincial government to dialogue with.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: So you're talking about your overall organization.

MR. MOORE: Alberta Urban Municipalities Association.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yeah, vis-à-vis talking to each of the separate entities.

MR. MOORE: Yes.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: May I answer the question of the population and the census? I did realize that I asked about the

census and I did realize the lateness of the census, but I feel that if the principle is going to be fairness in representation by population – and in northern Alberta we know that we do have a lot of movement in the north and that our families are young – the whole redistribution question and the money you are spending now would not seem logical in the nth degree if you do not update your population. Whether you ask the federal government to have that particular census taken at an earlier date for that purpose, I don't know. But I think there are other avenues that perhaps you could look at. I certainly feel that an updated census population list to start off this whole process – if you're going to massively reorganize according to this based on what happened in B.C., I think it's absolutely imperative that a new census be done. I understand the problems associated with that, but those are hurdles we have to overcome, given the significance of the whole issue.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Denise.

Are there any other questions? Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I have a question for Peter, because you are the mayor of the town of Slave Lake and have been involved in municipal councils for a long period of time. If a commission of five people was struck to do the actual review of the boundaries for Alberta, who could you see sitting on a committee? Three people. We'll make it easy.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: You and I.

MR. CARDINAL: Other than Denise and the mayor and the deputy mayor. You mentioned the urban municipalities.

MR. MOORE: Well, I think that was in terms of a place where we would expect some feedback. These are the results and one last kick at the cat, not necessarily to sit in judgment.

MR. CARDINAL: Why not?

MR. MOORE: Why not? That is probably going to be one of the most difficult tasks this committee and the people that carry the ball after you will have in your term.

MR. CARDINAL: We don't select the committee.

MR. MOORE: No, I realize that. You're the first step of a very, very difficult process.

MR. CARDINAL: If you were to recommend five people to make up the commission, for an example, is what I'm getting at. And if it were to be adopted as the commission and, say, the public or we had an opportunity to recommend – and that's why I'm asking – who should possibly be considered, then it's good to hear from you people. You know, give us that information. Who should we recommend if we have that opportunity? Should we recommend Peter Moore and Denise or . . .

MR. MOORE: Well, I guess from a principles point of view, certainly a representation from all parties, as MLAs, is important and should continue, but I think there also has to be some representation from the areas that are affected. One of the concerns we have that we probably didn't articulate very well is that in our constituency we have a variety of communities that

have different jurisdictions, different income levels. They operate under different Acts. We've got the different Indian bands, who have different income levels, Metis settlements that are evolving, hamlets, IDs, towns with various levels. If you start mixing this mess up, one of the biggest difficulties I think we have in northern Alberta is effective intercommunity relationships. If you suddenly take a constituency and cut it into three and parcel it up, I think you would destroy a lot of the relationship-building and a lot of the work that's been done in the past. While you may address a concern that you have in the global picture with a court question, making sure your associate across the House or beside you represents the same number, you effectively destroy a lot of community work, community associations, and relationships that have been built up. I think that would be disastrous. So I think that when you start changing boundaries in a significant way, I would certainly hope there is some input from those who are affected. How you do that I really can't answer, but you have to involve somehow the people who will be most affected by that kind of change.

MR. CARDINAL: One thing I just want clarified, Peter. You mentioned political parties. I don't believe the commission will be made up of any political parties, from what I gather. Now, I'm not sure if that's a final decision or not.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: That hasn't been decided as yet.

MR. CARDINAL: No, and I'm not sure if it will be.

MR. BRUSEKER: Actually, that ties into the question I wanted to ask you too. One of our recommendations is to recommend the makeup of the commission. In the past the commission here in the province has had currently sitting MLAs, so the three of us could conceivably be on the commission, for example. Other jurisdictions have moved towards commissions that are non-partisan; in other words, no current sitting MLAs being on the commission and the commission being struck from other than the MLAs. Do you have a viewpoint on that? Should the commission have currently sitting MLAs? I agree with you that if it does, it should be all-party.

MR. MOORE: I think it should.

MR. BRUSEKER: You think it should.

MR. MOORE: They were elected to represent and speak for the people, and they certainly know their constituents. I mean, there may be a few downsides to it, but I . . .

MR. STAMP: What kind of person would that be that didn't have any political strings?

MR. BRUSEKER: Perhaps overt political strings. How's that? We all walk around with our labels tattooed on our foreheads, but I don't know your political stripe yet, Herman.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Does anyone else have any questions for Peter?

MR. MOORE: I do owe Frank an apology, Madam Chairman. I didn't remember his name or his position or the constituency he came from, so I owe you, Frank, that apology.

MR. BRUSEKER: No problem.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Stan, would you like to proceed with yours?

MR. JENKINS: Yes, please.

Thank you very much for the opportunity. My name is Stan Jenkins. I'm first vice-president of the Lesser Slave Lake PC Association. I would also like to introduce Mr. Herman Stamp, who is an associate on our board of directors. As indicated, this is submitted by the Lesser Slave Lake PC Association. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman and members of the select committee and other ladies and gentlemen here tonight. I'd like to thank the committee and whoever else is responsible for the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon. I very much appreciate it. I would like to present the views of the members on the current debate over what criteria should be used in the determination of electoral boundaries in Alberta.

The thrust of our submission is for effective representation. This is more important than representation by population. There are important differences between rural and urban ridings. First of all, there is the geographic difference. Our MLA must travel hundreds of kilometres each day to serve the needs of the constituency. If our riding was to increase in size due to the equality of population, the ability to effectively represent the constituency would be reduced. The increase in the size of the constituency has a doubling effect on the ability to effectively service the constituency, by adding population and distance.

In the select special committee's report, option 1 is based on current legislation and historical Alberta practice. The distribution rule of 42 urban divisions and 41 rural divisions has worked well for a number of years. At present 63 percent of eligible voters are classified as urban and 37 percent as rural, and it is our view that rural representation must not be lessened. We ask the committee: how could you implement a system in Alberta where the interests of the regional minority are not protected while at this very time our provincial government is fighting for Senate reform at the federal level? If, as indicated in the second option, the boundaries are changed to accommodate the 25 percent factor, it would distort the historic urban-rural balance. If that happens, the possibility could exist for the majority to impose their wishes on the minority. For example, it would not be fair or just if the people of Edmonton or Calgary decided that a pulp mill should or should not be built in Slave Lake without considering the wishes of rural Albertans who would be most affected by this project.

Determining electoral boundaries should also take into account that urban MLAs have the advantage of providing a common front on issues in a particular urban centre common to all MLAs representing the area. For rural MLAs there is very little opportunity for a common front to form because most often the MLA in a rural riding can only provide representation as an individual because the issue is unique to that constituency only.

To summarize, there are a number of factors other than population equality to be considered when establishing electoral boundaries, such as historical and regional claims for effective representation, sparsity or density of population, accessibility, and the special interests of the people within the constituency. A possible formula to be used in any constituency to calculate comparable demands on any MLA in the performance of their duties could be based on a points system. For example, Lesser Slave Lake constituency might look like this: (a) number of

voters, 12,074, equals 12,074 points; (b) number of square miles, approximately 15,000, equals 15,000 points. I guess we should have converted that to kilometres, but anyway . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: It's 44,678.

MR. JENKINS: Okay; (c) number of communities, 22, times 100 equals 2,200 points; (d) ID 17 east and ID 17 central times 100 equals 200 points; (e) number of kilometres from Edmonton to constituency and back equals 750 points. Additional points could be awarded to special needs such as pulp mills, native culture, et cetera.

In conclusion, we would ask this committee to consider this simplified example as one possible alternative to one person, one vote, but we feel, Madam Chairman, that it is of utmost importance that Albertans maintain the urban-rural balance that allows for effective representation for all. I would also just like to add – this is my own personal note here – that city services, for example Edmonton and Calgary, are for the most part met by the cities themselves. There is a much greater demand for time and services, as you will agree, from rural MLAs. I'm also pleased, Madam Chairman, to hear that your committee will be making a return visit to our area. This is such an important issue that we welcome the opportunity to have further input to present a more comprehensive submission. As Mrs. Wahlstrom indicated, we did not have either the time or statistics at our disposal to present a more comprehensive proposal.

Thank you very much.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Stan. We won't be back right in Slave Lake, but we will be in Donnelly on Wednesday, I believe.

MR. CARDINAL: Stan, those figures match Edmonton-Whitemud in total amount. That's the largest riding.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for Stan? Yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you. Stan, thanks for the presentation. On the last paragraph on your first page you say that "the possibility could exist for the majority to impose their wishes on the minority." Are you suggesting that the reverse isn't true, that the minority could impose their will on the majority?

MR. JENKINS: I wouldn't think so, because I think the cities could possibly – you know, large constituencies could be developed for the urban centres which could address urban needs. But on the same hand, I don't think we should be looking at decreasing the amount of urban ridings.

MR. SIGURDSON: So you don't decrease the amount of urban ridings. Are you arguing that we then increase the amount of urban ridings?

MR. JENKINS: Well, that's another option that could be looked at as well. But I think that if I had all the answers, I guess we probably wouldn't have to have any more hearings. But a balance certainly has to be kept. As pointed out, there are special needs in the rural areas, and I guess I could probably speak for all the rural areas. Because of these special needs, a balance has to be kept whereby their needs are met as well. I guess the problem is that if the numbers of rural ridings don't

have adequate representation, they won't be met. I guess you could compare it to the same scenario that we have on the federal scene, with basically the west being dominated by the east. We're looking at Senate reform for that. Maybe we need a Senate for Alberta; I don't know.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just to follow up. Historically in Alberta, when we've had the majority of the population living in rural communities, they've had the majority of seats in rural Alberta with a minority of seats in the urban centres because there was the minority of the population there. I think it was 70-30 at one time. We've had a depopulation of the rural area over the course of time. We've not had a rural decline to the same degree, and the number of seats has not maintained the same representation as has the change in the shift of population from rural to urban. If you argue that there ought to continue to be a balance of regions – and I regret that because I think what we're doing when we start to argue regions: we say that urban doesn't care for rural and vice versa. I tend to view it as Albertans representing the best interests of the province as opposed to an urban/rural front being put up. But if you argue that we maintain the current ratio and if we continue the depopulation from rural Alberta to urban Alberta, at what point on that scale would you see the need to change the ratio?

MR. STAMP: That's what this submission is. The submission is based on not decreasing the rural representation, with maybe putting in a different type of formula for establishing the boundaries rather than the amount of electors, building something else in it to give it a more equal representation. Now, if an urban population gets so congested or high – this is what you're questioning – then maybe it should be increased accordingly. There should be a stage built in there where probably it should be increased, naturally.

MR. SIGURDSON: I guess the question I'm asking is: at what point? Because the representation seems to be saying that now isn't the appropriate time.

MR. STAMP: Well, I don't think it was considered at all when we were thinking about it, and there again I think Stan has brought it out that we'd all like to have more time to think about a lot of those things.

MR. JENKINS: I'd like to just make one more comment. As far as the population moving to the larger areas, it should also be kept in mind that going back several years when there was a larger population in the rural area, we were more or less an agricultural-base society, and now in rural communities there's more resource development. It's much more technical, and there are much greater demands put on the MLAs who are representing the area. If it was just straight farming, it probably wouldn't be so much of a problem, but the economies are so diverse now. We talked about Edmonton-Whitemud. We don't have a pulp mill over there. We don't have any refineries. The problems are much more unique in the rural areas.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay; thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Frank, did you have a question?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah, just one really quick question. Stan,

currently we have 83 MLAs in the Legislature. Do you see any need to change that in either direction?

MR. JENKINS: I believe – this is my personal opinion – that as the population of Alberta increases, we should be looking at increasing the number of MLAs but maybe not at the sacrifice of lessening the number of rural MLAs.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you. That was all I had to ask.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any more questions?

Stan, can I just ask you a question? We've heard this from other hearings we've had. Are you saying that there really should be almost a two-tiered system for establishing boundaries, one for the rural and one for the urban?

MR. JENKINS: I'd have to really give some thought to that. I couldn't speak for our association on that particular matter. You know, when you're looking at the rural areas, you do have areas in the province that are probably more geared towards agriculture, and maybe the problems in representation wouldn't be the same as areas like Lesser Slave Lake or Fort McMurray or Athabasca-Lac La Biche. I don't know if you necessarily need a two-tiered system, but you could have a system, as we pointed out in this formula here, where perhaps other things could be looked at in coming up with a basic formula for representation such as we've suggested there. That was only an example, but as mentioned there, additional points or whatever consideration could be given to the special needs of a community. If it's a straight agricultural community, obviously there wouldn't be the same demands upon an MLA as other communities with a lot more technological industry involved.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Yes, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Pat, just a comment on that. When we visited Saskatchewan, I believe it was the Saskatchewan government that because of regional disparities and special needs of northerners had a set number of ridings for the north rather than going to a 25 percent variance. There are options that are open because of geographic region and the special needs of northerners that if I remember right – I don't know. Frank may remember. They had two ridings that were . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Two northern ridings.

MR. CARDINAL: . . . set regardless of population.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mike. Herman, did you have something to present?

MR. STAMP: No. I'm sort of on this same presentation.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: You're coauthoring? Okay.

MR. STAMP: I think there's something that maybe should be said. Alberta, I think you're all aware, is a little bit unique from, as Mike says, Saskatchewan. I think you could probably put all of northern Saskatchewan into the town of Slave Lake. The population of northern Alberta and the roads and the complex

systems that do go on in our northern province – we're way ahead of any other province in Canada in that respect. All you have to do is look at a map. So I think what we're asking for here is that it not be lessened in any way in the process of representation.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Any other comments? Pearl, did you have a presentation to make?

MS CALAHASEN: Yes, I do.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Would you like to proceed?

MS CALAHASEN: I sure would love to proceed.

First of all, I'd like to say welcome to the Lesser Slave Lake constituency, Madam Chairman and members of the committee. I think you've hit one of the greatest parts of Alberta, as you'll probably attest to.

MRS. WAHLSTROM: Did you bring tourism dollars with you?

MS CALAHASEN: Yeah, did you bring the dollars that we require?

I would like to thank the committee for taking the time to hold a public hearing in this constituency, particularly looking at and seeing the diversity that occurs in this area. However, since you are only spending in one part of the whole constituency, it's very difficult to see what we do have in the whole area. I believe the Lesser Slave Lake constituency is a very special part of the province; I'd like to say of the world, but some people say that's just getting a little too ambitious.

This constituency has a population composed of Metis people, treaty Indians, and Albertans of European descent, as well as other minorities. So when you look at this constituency, when I'm representing the people in the constituency, I think of the diversity in terms of the population itself. I look at the constituency and break it up into three. It's almost like having three constituencies in one.

I'd like to expand on that, because I think that when we're looking at constituencies we normally see, I guess, something like what you'd call a homogeneity, but there's no really homogeneous group. However, when we're looking at the Lesser Slave Lake constituency, I have to refer to the fact that we have a very big agricultural sector, and that's within the High Prairie region and towards Kinuso. We have what we call the energy industry, which is in some of the northern part, as well as Slave Lake being the primary area. We also now have forestry, so I guess we have sort of like four. But there's also what we call the native issues portion. That has never really been included in terms of the constituency as a whole. For the first time, I guess, in the whole election process native people have been involved in the election this time, so it was very, very interesting to see the issues starting to rise which sort of have an impact in terms of the issues one has to deal with in the constituency.

We live and work within a large geographic area. In terms of its size, this constituency runs over 192 miles – oh, I guess we have to convert that to kilometres – on a north-south axis, and close to 132 miles at the widest east-west axis. So when you're looking at it in terms of mileage, or kilometres I guess, it's a huge constituency. I represent an area of approximately 16,000 square miles in this northern constituency. So when you're looking at the size, we're not looking only at the people or the

resources or the jobsites but rather at the size in terms of trying to access one place to another, which has been brought up to some extent.

Lesser Slave Lake's population is approaching 20,000, with a core of maybe 4,500 families. Our working population is primarily employed in agriculture and agribusiness; as I said, the oil and gas industry; forestry and wood products; commercial fishing; hunting and trapping, which is the native sector in most cases; tourism and service industries, which a lot of the different communities are starting to get involved in. Issues and concerns that are brought to my attention are many and varied and, of course, reflect many of the people's occupations that are evident in this area.

As a rural MLA I have to deal with all the various organizations, councils, boards, et cetera. To give a sample, I'll give you some ideas. I have three town councils, two hospital boards, two school boards, two IDs, three Metis settlements, six reserves, and many small communities which expect the same kind of service as meetings within the major centres. So basically, when we're talking about representation, we should look at the effectiveness and the fairness of dealing with the people. When we're talking about the size, it's almost impossible to be able to give them the amount of time they require and should have because they are part of the population of the whole area and receive the kind of interest they should have. I believe that with that kind of idea, we have to look at other ideas rather than just the eligible voter list.

These bodies view myself, the MLA, as the link with the provincial government. These various bodies all expect face-to-face meetings with myself, as do most people dealing with the MLA or the provincial government. The role of the MLA in rural society carries with it a certain level of expectancy from the population, which I believe is part of the deal in terms of becoming a political person. Enlarging the physical size of a rural riding will further increase the amount of time spent meeting with groups and individuals, resulting in more traveling within a riding, and I think it's been brought out here many times over that the travel one has to deal with in going from one meeting to another takes a long time.

I'll just give an example. The other day I had to be in Wabasca, and I had to meet people here in Slave Lake. In order for me to get to Wabasca, to leave my hometown in Grouard, I had to leave at I think it was about 7:30 in the morning to get there for a 10 o'clock meeting. I arrived in Wabasca at 10 o'clock. There are three hours actually spent on the road where you really cannot deal with the people in a face-to-face situation, so you've lost that time in terms of dealing with people. When we're talking about resources, even though I have a phone in my car, there are areas which the phone cannot access. Therefore, that kind of communication is broken and that link is gone. Basically, once I arrived there, I was meeting with people all day long till the time I had to leave, and it was another three hours to drive back into this area to be able to meet with other people and thus go back home. So when you're talking about time and dealing with people on a person-to-person basis, which is what people want, not dealing by phone, it's very, very difficult. So that size and that travel is very, very important when we're discussing electoral boundaries.

The expectations of the people, of course, in accessing is very important. One of the problems that seems to have really been articulated to me is the fact that some of these small communities cannot access me in terms of coming to meet with me even if I have offices within the two larger areas. When you

look at it – and I think this has been brought out too – the diversity that occurs in the economic area, particularly income, is very difficult for people who don't earn any money or don't have any vehicles to be able to come and meet with me in the offices. That in itself is another very difficult situation. So when we're talking about people coming to meet with their MLA, I have to be the one who has to go into these communities in order to have face-to-face communication with the people. So it's very, very difficult when we're looking at the idea of saying people should get fair and effective representation. If we go with the population, particularly when we're looking at using eligible voters, it's very, very difficult when you have to go out and deal with the people and they have to come and deal with you. Then being able to access the people in the way that you want to be able to access them and go on in that way is, I believe, very, very important.

There are so many other considerations in terms of the people accessing their MLA. I think some of these are that most of the people don't have the vehicles; as I said earlier, the transportation, the roads, the infrastructure have not been built up. Therefore, they really don't have the accessibility. There's no public transportation, as in an urban setting, which they can access immediately to go to a meeting anywhere in the city. There's very little time for them to be able to get together to deal with the issues that are very, very important in their area. So when we're talking about diversity, there are so many things. The lake itself is situated in a position where you cannot cross it from one end to the other unless we start building tourism facilities, which will make us have boats or travel or transportation to be able to take us from one point to the other. When we're talking about jobs, that creates the income level. When we're talking about the dirt roads that are here – although we're trying to ensure that we get on the priority list in terms of getting them paved.

I think the linguistic differences have not been addressed in our area. That is the sense that most of the people, particularly in our small communities, definitely have a different language and, therefore, a different cultural background. Now they're just starting to get involved in the political process and starting to understand and starting to make some demands in terms of their needs in the regional areas. That diversity in itself is very, very important when we're looking at the whole of Alberta in terms of a multicultural grouping.

There is also the idea, as a rural MLA, that the family is very, very important. It is very, very difficult as an MLA who serves a large area trying to meet face to face with people and my constituents, but it is very, very difficult, too, on your personal family life. You do not have the quality time to be able to spend with your family or the numbers of hours with your family due to the fact that you're away from them so often and for so long because you want to ensure that you maintain the contact with your constituents and address the concerns that are required. The effective representation of the rural population may well be impossible if the size of rural constituencies is increased to correspond to the same population base evident in an urban setting. It is very, very difficult when we think of that.

One of the dangers of splitting the constituency representation within the Legislative Assembly to correspond with the urban/rural rationale is the possibility of regional minority interests being ignored, as I earlier said. Although some people are trying to make arguments relating to equal representation of the voting public in determining the redrawing of constituency boundaries, we must consider the important aspect of effective

representation in the more sparsely populated areas of our province. That has to be taken into consideration when we're looking at all rural MLAs: the diversity that occurs or that is in existence in the areas that we represent. It doesn't matter which party is representing the area. It's basically the regional disparities that have to be looked upon in order to make sure that the people of Alberta and particularly the people of each constituency are represented effectively. I don't think we can ignore the fact that there are many, many people, that there are many, many problems in terms of dealing with their constituencies, particularly when you are looking at many diversities within, not only personal problems that exist but also within the economic diversities within a constituency.

Just to sum up, I'd like to say that my constituency's an exciting constituency, very challenging in terms of the diversities that I have to deal with not only on an economic basis but also on a racial basis, with linguistic factors and cultural factors that have to be brought into place; and when we're looking at the educational situation in our area, making sure that there are people being given the education that they require, being able to meet with the boards in order for me to be able to express their interests, and the same with the hospital boards. I have not even mentioned the hospital boards or the number of special interest groups in my area, but there are many, many of them. I know that they have already been listed in the previous submission, but I'd like to say that these factors should be taken into consideration when determining the boundaries and setting the task in terms of a framework for the task force.

Thank you very much.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pearl. Are there any questions?

MR. SIGURDSON: Maybe a comment that ends up with a question, Madam Chairman. Pearl, I think all of us as MLAs, all 83, could pretty much put forward an argument that regardless of the similarity of the issues that may be brought to us by our constituents, there's some unique factor in each one, and therefore we have to deal with the uniqueness of each one. In a rural constituency where you've got those individual problems compounded by the time it takes to get from point A to point B – you have cited a case where you have three hours – I'm wondering if you see any difference between spending that time traveling or . . . Can you compare it at all to an urban MLA who may have, while you're traveling, the second and third constituent to see that day because they have a constituency population, a voter population, that is two or three times the size of your constituency? Can you see any comparison between the number of constituents that you have to see versus the travel time that you have to commit?

MS CALAHASEN: You're saying that how many people do I see – to take an example, Wabasca. If I go to Wabasca in one day, it usually takes the whole day. Now, in order for me to address certain concerns in their area – that particular area would be dealing with native issues mostly, and special considerations have got to be taken in terms of the cultural difference in dealing with that group. So if we look at Wabasca, I go to Wabasca, I deal with the issues, and we discuss what kinds of solutions we can come up with. We deal with the issues there, supposing that might take, say, the band administration and ID No. 17 that I would be dealing with, but also with the recreation department and a number of other special interest

groups. I would say that talking about population in terms of the people I would be dealing with there, I guess it would be about 4,000 people, if I was to hit every one of those. Now, to drive back here to see another group, if I was to do it at night, and that's usually the time that we get, then I would be dealing with maybe one or two groups in most cases, and that's about all. So that takes up the whole day.

If I think of an urban MLA – I don't know who I should use as an example. Maybe I'll use Pat; she's safe. If I were to use Pat: if she calls a meeting, she can have one meeting in one place, and if you advertise it, it can reach the whole of the groups and everybody can have access to that. She may be able to generate more people to attend this meeting and pass on information or gather the kinds of concerns that are required. Now, in order for me to generate the kind of numbers that she probably could generate – 'and I'm thinking about another colleague of ours who did that – then basically I would have to go not only to Wabasca; I'd have to come back to Slave Lake and I'd have to go High Prairie, which would take me approximately three days to reach the same amount.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: I think where Tom's coming from – you used my riding as an example, Pearl. My riding is in the upper limit, and I have almost 24,000 eligible voters. My riding is approximately 30 square kilometres, where yours is – how big is Pearl's riding?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: It's 44,000.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: It's 44,000 square kilometres. You spend your time on the road, obviously, where my time is spent – we have maybe seven to nine presentations a day from groups in my office.

MS CALAHASEN: Isn't that nice, that you can answer so many people so quickly?

MR. SIGURDSON: I think therein lies the difference, that there are times when an urban MLA thinks: wouldn't it be nice to be out on the road . . .

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Without the car phone.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah, perhaps without the car phone. . . . so that I could go from point A to point B, collect my thoughts about what I've just heard, maybe put some notes onto a dictaphone before I have the next constituent coming in with a problem that is completely different. Because by the end of the day you've had eight or 10 different folk that have come to see you. Then at the end of the day you get to write down notes and letters and do all of that stuff. I guess the thing is that while each MLA is . . .

MS CALAHASEN: Unique.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah, each one is unique, but they have a variety of problems before them that are generated by individuals.

MS CALAHASEN: To sort of speak on that. Basically when I go to Wabasca, I don't just deal with social services or tourism; it's a variety of issues that I have to deal with. And when I get

there, it's not only one meeting but rather one after another. So when I'm meeting, I meet maybe with the band, with the ID council, with the rec board, and I meet with a number of other interest groups. But in between all those meetings, I also meet with individuals who want help. If you look on a daily basis at how many people I meet, I wish I had a little spot to be able to say, "Here I am, guys; come after me." It would be great.

However, I find that I am not reaching as many people as I'd like to reach due to the travel that has to be included. I'd love your situation, because I think that's the ideal in terms of dealing with people on a daily basis. I would love that kind of a situation. However, because of the fact that I can't access that, it's very, very difficult. Because anytime I have my meetings here in Slave Lake, when I arrive here in the morning, I'm booked from 10 till 10:30; 11, 11:30; over lunch; 1 o'clock, 1:30; 2, 2:30; 3, 3:30, depending on how many people want to meet me. But basically that's the same thing. So when I have my office days here, that's basically what happens. Or when I have my office days in High Prairie, I'm booked right from morning till evening, sometimes till 10 o'clock.

That doesn't take into consideration the writing that you're talking about and the kinds of issues that you have to draw up and how you're going to start thinking about how you're going to make sure that your constituency gets the best things possible and going after that, kind of being proactive and looking at plans. That doesn't include that. But when you're talking about that kind of thing, it's very difficult to write when you're driving, particularly on roads like this or in weather like this. It's very difficult to write as you're driving along. You can't write; you can't even dictate sometimes because you have to be careful where you're driving. You can't phone sometimes because you're afraid that you're going to run into a deer. Those kinds of things are basically the kinds of disparities that occur. You know, it sounds ideal, but it's not. It's waste. To me, it's a waste of time because I could better be utilizing that time to see my people.

MR. JENKINS: Some days the snowplows aren't even out.

MS CALAHASEN: Yeah. You have to get on the horn.

MR. JENKINS: If you're following a logging truck or a tanker truck, you're not thinking about . . .

MS CALAHASEN: Yeah, it takes forever. Who do I phone then?

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions?

Well, I'd like to thank all of you for coming out. Your presentations were absolutely excellent. We have been gleaning information from throughout the province, and it has been excellent, I have to say. We've had some very good information. Of course, I'm an accountant by background, so I always like to see formulas come up. I didn't get involved in the formula discussion today, but I do enjoy formulas very much, and I appreciate the work that you've put into it. Yours is quite detailed, and that's always helpful. Everywhere we go, we seem to gather a little something, a little something extra. We learn about the area, we learn about the people, and I think that's very beneficial.

On behalf of the committee, I'm sure we've enjoyed our stay this afternoon in Slave Lake, and sometime we'd like to come back. I don't know when that will be, but . . .

MS CALAHASEN: We'll invite you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: We'd like to come back in the summer. Although when we left Edmonton today, it was colder in Edmonton than when we arrived here.

We're on the road again this afternoon. We're off to Fort McMurray. So if there aren't any other comments, once again I'd like to thank you all for coming out and for your presentations. We certainly have made note of them, and they're on the recording. Thank you very much.

MS CALAHASEN: Thanks, Pat. Thank you very much, folks, for choosing Slave Lake.

[The committee adjourned at 3:44 p.m.]