

[Acting Vice-Chairman: Mrs. Black]

[7:04 p.m.]

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Pat Black. I'm the MLA for Calgary-Foothills, and I'm substituting for our Chairman tonight, Bob Bogle. He kind of got a little snowbound down in Milk River today so was unable to join us.

We're part of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, and we're delighted to be here tonight in Fort McMurray and to meet with you. Before we start, I'd like to introduce the team we have with us tonight. Unfortunately, not all our committee was able to make it. On my right we have Tom Sigurdson; he's the New Democratic member of the committee from Edmonton-Belmont. On my left we have Frank Bruseker from Calgary-North West; he's the Liberal member of our group. Next to Frank we have Pat Ledgerwood; he's the Chief Electoral Officer for the province. On the far left we have Bob Pritchard; he's our senior administrative officer. In the back we have Robin Wortman; he's our hearing co-ordinator. So if anything goes wrong, it's Robin's fault.

As you can see, there are two gentlemen over here, and they're from *Hansard*. We have Gary Garrison and Doug Jeneroux, and all these mikes. I don't want anybody to feel intimidated by them. They're part of the *Hansard*. All of our hearings have been recorded, so that reference can be made back to them when we start to write our report, or if you require information from them, it is *Hansard*, so it is available to the public.

We try to keep our meetings rather informal, and we'd invite all of you – I think we have five presenters – to come up front. Come on up and join us here.

MR. SIGURDSON: We're a friendly group.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Before we get into the actual presentations, I'd like to digress a little bit and have the Chief Electoral Officer, Pat Ledgerwood, explain some of the events that have led up to the structuring and the formation of this special committee and to sort of just give you a little bit of background on it.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. You may recall that the last boundaries commission in Alberta sat in 1983-84 and at that time established the boundaries we used at the '86 and the '89 general elections. Legislation requires that there be a boundaries commission struck after every second general election. Now, normally there would have been a commission struck at the first session of this 22nd Legislature. However, there was a court case in British Columbia that impacted on electoral boundaries, and by agreement of the three House leaders, it was determined that they would set up a committee to tour the province and receive input from interested electors and individuals, groups, so they would then go back to the Legislature and provide some recommendations.

Now, the situation in British Columbia was that they had electoral divisions that ranged in size from just under 5,600 in population up to over 68,000. They recognized that this disparity was a bit much, and the government contracted with a Justice Fisher and it was called the Fisher commission. They reviewed the electoral boundaries of British Columbia, and they made three recommendations which impacted on the Legislature in British Columbia and may have a domino effect on other jurisdictions.

First thing in British Columbia, they eliminated the dual member ridings. The second thing was that they increased the number of MLAs in the House from 69 to 75. The part that impacts on us is that they said this 5,600 to 68,000 was far too much, and what they did was take the province of British Columbia's total population, divide it by 75, and come up with an average, and they said no electoral division should be more than 25 percent or under 25 percent of this average.

The government accepted the Fisher commission report but didn't react to it, and a Professor Dixon took the government to court. The case was heard before Madam Justice McLachlin, and at that time she basically supported the Charter of Rights, where we have one person, one vote. She also supported the Fisher commission – the particular aspect that we're interested in is the plus or minus 25 percent – and said it was up to the Legislature to implement the new rules, regulations in establishing a commission. There was no appeal on Justice McLachlin's decision. For the record Justice McLachlin from the Supreme Court of British Columbia has gone to the Supreme Court of Canada, and she's now one of our justices on the Supreme Court.

Professor Dixon pursued his case and it was heard by Justice Meredith. What Dixon said was basically that the system we have, this great disparity in the number of people represented by an MLA, should be changed. The court basically said that they were not there to legislate, that that was the responsibility of the Legislature and the elected members. The court was not to govern and left it at that. The Legislature reacted to this by establishing a commission. The commission divided the province into 75 electoral divisions, all within plus or minus 25 percent of the average. They tabled their report on January 15, and it became law at the end of January this year.

So that'll give you a little of the background on what's happened in British Columbia. We don't know what the impact will be in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Pat. Are there any questions that any of you may have of Pat?

Okay. What we normally do at this point is go into a slide presentation. But before we do that, just to reaffirm our position as a committee, we are not the commission. We are only the committee that has been struck from all three parties to go throughout the province and talk to Albertans and gather information and your thoughts.

The McLachlin case that was heard in British Columbia is under the British Columbia jurisdiction. However, we do feel that there has been a precedent set in B.C. and, therefore, we must take the case seriously and look at it very carefully. So our committee has been going out and gathering information, and we will be reporting to the Legislature as a committee with our findings and with some recommendations or guidelines that we feel should aid the commission in its decision-making. We won't be the commission, I wouldn't think, and one of the things we are asking for input on, as well as the concerns with the individual ridings, is who should form or how that commission should be formatted. So we're looking for a lot of information, and we've been trying to do this in quick order. We've been on the road quite a bit, and we have, I think, about six more spots before we're finished, before March 8. So we are moving around the province at quite a pace. But I just want to be sure you realize we are not the commission. We are only the committee that will report to the Legislature.

I think right now, if we could, we usually go into a little overhead projection presentation. A lot of the information most of you may have received already in the form of our letter to Albertans, but we've added some additional information that we've been able to tabulate as our hearings have proceeded. I've asked Tom Sigurdson to lead us through the slides. Could you do that, Tom, please?

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The first slide you have is the list of all the constituencies in alphabetical order and their voter population beside them. The only thing to note on this is that the constituency of Cardston, while it is very low – in fact, it's the lowest in the province at 8,100 electors on the list – has an Indian reservation, the Blood Indian Band, that at the last enumeration where the Blood participated had 1,800 electors who chose not to participate. So their constituency number may be artificially low. Taking all of the constituencies and putting them into order by elector size, you can see that we have a top end of Edmonton-Whitemud at 31,500 and again the bottom end constituency of Cardston at 8,100. So there is a discrepancy between our constituencies.

Taking all the names, adding them together, we come up with approximately 1.5 million eligible voters in our province. If you divide that by the 83 constituencies, you end up with an average of 18,685. Using the formula suggested by Justice McLachlin of plus or minus 25 percent off the average, you have a top end of 23,356 and a bottom end of 14,014.

Going back to the numerical order of constituencies, you can see that we've highlighted two groups. The green group is that group which is above the average suggested by then Chief Justice McLachlin. They are all urban constituencies. The pink highlighted constituencies are those constituencies below the suggested variance of 25 percent, and they are all rural constituencies. Putting that onto a map of the province, you can see that a good number of the constituencies in our province as they're laid out are well under the 25 percent suggested tolerance level. There are two constituencies on there that are above. You can barely make them out. That's Medicine Hat and that's St. Albert, nuzzled against Edmonton; they are above the average at the moment.

Looking at the cities, this is the city map of Calgary by constituency, and you can see that a number of the constituencies are well over the 25 percent. Most of these constituencies are on the periphery of the boundary of the city in that those areas of the cities are still growing. The same thing with the next slide: you'll note that Edmonton again has a growing population, again on the outer edges of the city, and those constituencies are growing as well. Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West are the two urban centres that have no problem with the existing mean at the moment. The city of Medicine Hat is the fourth largest in the province. It has a very large voter population, and something will have to be done to assist in that area.

The Red Deer constituencies are a bit unique in our province. In the last Electoral Boundaries Commission the city of Red Deer had one MLA; there was one member for the city of Red Deer. It was a very large constituency, and the commission was instructed by the Legislature to create two constituencies. Dividing the city into two, there wasn't sufficient electoral population to warrant two constituencies, so the commission went outside the city limits, which are outlined in brown, and went into the county of Red Deer to get sufficient voter population to bump up the two constituencies to the provincial

average. The city of St. Albert is that community nestled next to Edmonton. It, too, is growing and has grown significantly and is very large in terms of our voter population.

This map indicates those constituencies that not only fall outside the suggested variance of less than 25 percent off the average, but this purple indicates those constituencies that are 35 percent off the average, so it's still a great number of them. This next map shows those constituencies that are 50 percent off the average voter population. These constituencies, to put it into numerical numbers, have less than 10,000 voters per constituency.

These blue dots indicate the locations where the committee has traveled or will travel. We've gone throughout the province and will continue our task and our journey over the next few days and weeks. You can see that we started back in November. We've had such a wonderful time and we've had so many responses from so many Albertans that we haven't been able to update this yet. We are traveling back to Hanna, Red Deer. We'll have another hearing in Edmonton, although that one's been updated, and we'll also be going into Wainwright due to popular demand. Again, using those constituencies that fall 35 percent below the average, we wanted to go into areas that may be most affected by whatever decision we make and subsequently whatever decisions the commission will make. So these green dots indicate where we have been or where we are going, and they cover the highlighted area of those constituencies that fall 35 percent below the average.

One of the problems, or conundrums I suppose, that we encountered when we first started is that we know there are a lot of people in our province who are not represented by using exclusively a voter or enumerated list. Other jurisdictions, British Columbia and Manitoba, use a total voter population list, and we wanted to see what kind of changes that would bring to the maps. There are a number of people who do not fall into the electors category. I suppose the largest is those people that we spend a great deal of our provincial budget on: students, those people under the age of 18. MLAs represent those individuals as well, even though they're not entitled to vote. Immigrants; Indian reservations, as I mentioned with the constituency of Cardston; and religious groups: regardless of whether people choose to participate or not in the electoral process, they are constituents of MLAs. When they have a problem, they go to their MLA whether or not they participate in the elections.

So taking the total population of our province and again dividing it by 83 constituencies, you can see we end up with different averages. The average becomes 28,500 for a top-end population, then, of 35,000 per constituency or a bottom end of 21,000. The next map will show that it's made a couple of changes. Most notably, I suppose, is that if you look at Cardston, which was on the very bottom in the last diagram, it's moved up to the middle of the low end. There was some significant movement of constituencies around the province, but there are still a number that are well above and a number that are well below. You can see, though, going back again to the map of the province, that Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie as well as St. Albert and Medicine Hat are now above the average plus 25 percent. There are still a number that are below average, but we now have two large rural areas that fall outside the average plus 25 percent.

Again, the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, you'll see in a moment, still have the large areas where there has to be some readjustment in order to bring their numbers into line. Again,

there are still on the periphery of the city those areas that are still growing but nonetheless still have to be readjusted.

This is where you start to see a bit of a difference. When we look at those constituencies that are now under 35 percent using a total population figure, I think you can see that we've fallen from 19 to 18 here. The next slide is even more significant in terms of those constituencies that are now under 50 percent of the total population average. There is only one remaining that is really a major problem.

That's the slide presentation. If you liked tonight's presentation so much, we are in St. Paul and Viking tomorrow. I know it's not a great drive down, so if you are interested or if you think of more questions tonight that you don't ask this evening, that's where we'll be tomorrow.

**MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN:** Are there are any questions for Tom on the presentation?

Thank you very much, Tom.

Our other custom is that normally we have the local MLA with us. He will be with us, the Hon. Norm Weiss. He's appearing on a talk show right now, and we expect he'll be coming over as soon as it's over, I think fairly shortly actually.

**MR. ALMDAL:** Between 7 and 8. He'll be here shortly after 8, I believe.

**MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN:** Shortly after 8? Thank you. So Norm will be joining us. Hopefully he'll have a comment or two to make.

If there aren't any other questions right now, maybe we should proceed with the presentations. Dan, would you like to lead off?

**MR. MEAKES:** I would. I'm Dan Meakes, and I've come on behalf of public school district 2833. There's just a short statement that I'm going to pass out. On behalf of the Fort McMurray public school district, I wish to express some thanks to the committee. Your hospitable invitation we're going to have to turn down and let you go to Viking on your own.

This evening I wish to make three fairly simple points. The first one is that we affirm the principle of representation by population and, however that population is identified, whether it's by the electorate or whether it's the total population, that moving towards a more equitable situation in terms of the distribution of seats is helpful to this constituency and to those people who are involved in paying taxes within the school district. The second thing is: should there be no major changes in this constituency? If the status quo is the case, we prefer to see the constituency remain as it is. The addition of any communities to this constituency in order to achieve some sort of equity outside the constituency would not be helpful, and I'll say more about that in a second. The third thing is that it is reasonable to expect that Fort McMurray will experience rapid growth in the coming years. The odds of that occurring seem to be increasing daily and monthly; Fort McMurray will grow for one reason or another. It is our desire at this point that a mechanism be established to initiate a new seat if major economic development be initiated.

I'd like to go on and say a few things about each of those three points. First, the province's traditional concern of balancing representation of urban and rural constituencies has evolved so that our representation does not reflect the population within the province. Fort McMurray is both rural and urban. This constituency really is a slice, and it may be that

one of the things this committee and the commission and ultimately the Legislature would want to look at is that for constituencies that are mixtures of rural and urban concerns, those concerns be balanced out in the constituency as opposed to the Legislature, with the attempt to establish representation that balances those traditional concerns. It could probably be achieved through the way the pie is sliced in creating the constituencies rather than in the House. It is our perception that option two or the variance of 25 percent, as outlined in the original correspondence to the province - we would strongly support that option, and particularly as it's been outlined this evening. Linking urban and rural areas together may achieve a greater balance and a better stab at equity between the constituencies, as has been our experience in Fort McMurray.

The second item is the present representation. Fort McMurray with its present population probably has adequate representation. Adding further communities, however, would pose problems. If, in order to achieve reorganization, the committee recommended to the Legislature the addition of further communities to the constituency, then we would be in opposition to this. In square miles, travel time, diversity of groups, this is one of the largest constituencies with complex issues and industrial tax transfer and a large number of school children. I suspect this constituency has the largest number of school children of any constituency in the province: three large school districts, all with very, very different demands and expectations. That alone poses a challenge for any representative in Edmonton. We do not feel that adding communities would assist either the Legislature or our own concerns within the constituency to be perceived as having fair representation.

The third item is really the question of planning for growth. We are requesting that this committee plan for the potential of dramatic increases in population in the constituency. Our preference would be the establishment of a second seat in the constituency with the announcement of OSLO. When that project is announced, the Legislature would simultaneously announce the addition of a new seat. If this is not achievable, if it's perceived by the committee or the Legislature as being pre-emptive, then the least acceptable solution would be the establishment of a formula that would predetermine when the Legislature would automatically approve a seat so that it would not take another committee, commission. It would not take further explorations in order to say, "Yes, indeed, this constituency is unfairly represented." For example, it could be that it's predetermined that when the voting population is 30,000 two years in a row, a second seat is established.

Expansion of the oil sands industry has a high impact on the whole of the province. These issues of community infrastructure are comprehensive and extremely complex. The rapid change that occurs in the population of this community when there's dramatic economic change has to be paralleled with representation that can respond, and to expect one member of the Legislature to be able to address the diverse issues as rapidly as they come is probably not achievable. It's not possible to address them quickly enough.

In addition to that, there's a whole series of other issues that our board has not come to a strong consensus on but probably should be identified at this point. This is an area in terms of the tourist industry and a variety of other industries where, at the same time the oil industry is expanding and at the same time there's very diverse population in the area, with representation I think we can capitalize on what already has a high level of momentum in northern Alberta.

When a member of the Legislature has an agenda that's 50 items long, the days just aren't long enough. It does not do justice to the business of the Legislature to have things that are put on hold, items that may result in success for both the present government and future governments, because they're identified as in process. So with the amount of growth that we're experiencing, we're suggesting that the least be that a mechanism is established to see a second seat in the constituency.

Thank you very much.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Tom, Frank, do you have any questions?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I appreciate the presentation you made. Right now we have a statutory requirement which says that following every second election there will be a commission established to examine electoral boundaries. We've had that on the books for quite some time. If we go to perhaps electoral boundaries by complete population, we may have to go by census results, but regardless of how we go, there will be a period of time when whatever representation you have for this period, you're stuck with it. Would you recommend that rather than have a review after every second election, we go at a fixed period of, say, every five years or every 10 years? There are jurisdictions in Canada that have a requirement to review constituency boundaries after both those periods of time; I think five and eight. Do you think we should stick with every second election? Every five years? Would you have a recommendation?

MR. MEAKES: I think to establish a mechanism that's ongoing so the Legislature can act upon dramatic change. Northern Alberta, whether it's this constituency or west of us, is probably going to experience over the next decade or two some pretty dramatic change. And to have to wait a decade or even five years, and the cost and expense of trying to come to consensus when, in terms of a census being available or in terms of polling, voter registration, however you want to count heads – there are tools to do it in some ways far more effectively and more accurately if the mechanism is already in place for the Legislature to say: "Yes, there's X number of people in this constituency. That has reached our threshold for creating a second constituency." Rather than a time line, I'd be more interested in the mechanism. Whether it's five years or 10 years, it can create fairly strong injustices.

The other point we're not in a position to address but this committee will have to address at some point is the question of migratory populations: if we have a new camp of 10,000 mobile constituents in this constituency, how and when they vote and so on. This has really been a situation of chaos in previous elections, both provincial and federal. What is their status? It's been very, very difficult for polling officers and so on to really identify, first of all, voter registration. It's quite possible that in the next provincial election this community would see a stable population in the neighbourhood of 50,000 people and an additional 10,000 people involved in long-term construction commitments. The implications of that for one member in the Legislature become bizarre to reflect upon: their ineffectiveness or the rate at which they burn out.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: No, nothing at this moment, thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Dan, thank you very much. We really appreciate your coming out tonight.

MR. MEAKES: I appreciate this opportunity and would ask to be excused. I'm going to slip away to a board meeting.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: By all means. Thank you very much, Dan.

Bill, would you like to go next?

MR. ALMDAL: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chairman. It is indeed a pleasure to be able to talk to you today. I am Bill Almdal with the PC party of Fort McMurray.

I agree with the one-vote, one-person principle, but in Alberta distance and travel do have their problems. Today we see people wanting to become involved, wanting to talk to their MLA. They want to be heard and want to see action on their talks, and when you have a constituency the size of Fort McMurray, for instance, it's extremely difficult to get around and see all the people. When you're in an urban centre, you can call a meeting and most people can reach there; no matter what the weather or whatever, they can make it there. So I would ask you to consider the size of ridings as well as the number of voters. I think there's an upper limit. Certainly take your certain average and try and get that way. But then again when putting the ridings together, make sure there is an upper limit to the distance traveled and the size that individual would have to cover. I think Dan was saying previously that Fort McMurray, for instance, has the potential for expanding. That's almost quite real and very shortly. We're looking here at two MLAs, not one. And also if you look at Athabasca, again with the potential of a mill down there, that riding also could increase. So the entire area could increase substantially.

Yes, some redistribution is necessary, but I hope that you do not increase the number of seats in the province. I think we should stay with that same number of seats. We could set McMurray up, for instance, in a similar way as Red Deer. If you start thinking of McMurray now and draw a line through the centre of the city somehow, then everything north for one and everything south for another is a possibility. Maybe we should start looking at that right now, because as Dan Meakes was saying, by the next election we could be sitting at 50,000 people in McMurray quite easily.

How your commission should be struck. Well, again I think I agree with you, Pat, that it's not the elected officials that should be on that commission to be set up but rather the Chief Electoral Officer and other judicial members from the province.

The timing. Every second election seems to be a good one. I think not only are you looking at areas that might grow, but you're looking at population migration; you're looking at all sorts of things. It's not a simple problem. It's quite complicated, and you'll probably have to take a look at everything. There is a possibility, for instance, that this commission when struck could take a look at McMurray and Athabasca and say, "All right, if this population does increase, then maybe we should think about a second seat prior to the next election." You could actually put that in there and say, "If the population does grow to 50,000, then do a seat now; don't wait for eight years for another commission." But, on the whole, on the average, every second election is more than ample I would think.

So thank you very much. It's very brief, but I usually speak

to the point.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: I just want to get one thing straight. Of course, if we were to review one constituency, it has a domino effect throughout the province. And suppose that you grow to 31,000 – I'm just going to pick 31,000 as an arbitrary figure – there certainly would be room for one and a half constituencies. If you wanted to pump it up, you'd have to go into Athabasca-Lac La Biche, and then it would have that domino effect.

MR. ALMDAL: Our population is already 34,000 now.

MR. SIGURDSON: But your voter population is 20,385. I was going back to voter population.

Let's suppose you went up to another half again of what you've got. It would create a rippling effect. Would you propose – I'm trying to accommodate, I think, your request – that there be a review but not necessarily a commission, that maybe after each election there be a review of electoral boundaries but not necessarily a commission? So that if they say, "Well, everything's fine; we don't foresee any rapid growth in any area of the province," then there doesn't necessarily have to be a commission struck, but there should be a review.

MR. ALMDAL: No, I was thinking of the fact, Tom, that when you have the resource projects that are coming on in our province and the impact they would have on the Fort McMurray constituency and on the Athabasca-Lac La Biche constituency – these are special cases. And you might in the commission's report address these special cases and these special cases only, not the entire province.

MR. SIGURDSON: I think, then, what you're almost suggesting – correct me if I'm wrong – is that you would anticipate a significant amount of the growth, say, in those two constituencies to be from outside of the province, for those workers to come from outside of the province. Otherwise, we've got a shift of population. If we're shifting 10,000 people from a variety of communities to Fort McMurray and Athabasca-Lac La Biche, then that's where the domino effect comes in. You may get out of my constituency 2,000 workers, in that I've got a large number of skilled tradespeople who come up to McMurray, thank you very much. So I know all about the election process and having to scramble for their ballots.

MR. ALMDAL: Yeah, I understand your remarks. Yes, it is a domino effect.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes, it is. So then could we have a review without necessarily having a commission?

MR. ALMDAL: Yes, I believe you could.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Could I ask a question on that? If you had a review, Bill, would you be in favour of what Dan had mentioned, to have the almost self-adjusting formula that he mentioned in his presentation?

MR. ALMDAL: When he spoke about the self-adjusting formula – we've thought about that also. But when you get into the province as a whole, it's very dynamic; things move around a lot. I don't think it's a very simple problem that can be done by a formula. In the case you're referring to, Fort McMurray, okay, you're going to increase the population by 15,000 or something like that. That's an exception; that's not a normal state of affairs. So, no, a formula I don't believe will help us out.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: The last question: do you feel that the majority of the growth will actually take effect right here in Fort McMurray?

MR. ALMDAL: Yes, it will. And to answer Tom, when we're looking at the tradespeople in the studies, we find that the tradespeople will have to come from out of town because there simply are not enough available in Alberta. We're having problems getting enough tradespeople on the job right now, and any major expansion is going to require assistance from the other provinces to get those trades here.

MR. BRUSEKER: Perhaps you can help me. I don't know where the OSLO leases are. I wonder if you could sort of show me on the map where they might be located. Fort McMurray city is right here.

MR. ALMDAL: Can you see McLelland Lake?

MR. BRUSEKER: McLelland Lake is there, yeah.

MR. ALMDAL: Just south of that.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you. That was the only question I had.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Okay. Does anyone else have any questions for Bill?

Well, thank you very much, Bill. We really appreciate your coming tonight, and we enjoyed your presentation.

Jim, would you like to proceed?

MR. CARBERY: Yes. I'm representing tonight the mayor, who's at another meeting. So on behalf of the mayor and the city council, of which Ann Dort-MacLean is a member, we welcome you to the city. I'm not going to go through this bureaucratic brief in detail. I'm also delivering one from the city economic development board, and I'll be quite honest: I don't even know if I understand all of it. I'll go through the main points in terms of the city's.

The first point the city is addressing is the appropriateness of the provisions of the electoral boundaries Act. The suggestion is that the Act should be amended to delete reference to urban and rural electoral divisions, that the Act provokes resentment between major cities and other areas of the province. Why aren't they just called electoral divisions? So the first recommendation is: remove all reference to urban and rural electoral divisions.

The second point is that the Act should be amended to reduce the number of electoral divisions from the existing 83 to a more realistic number, considering the representation used by the other major populated provinces such as Ontario, which has 130 divisions with each representing approximately 73,000 population,

and British Columbia, with 75 divisions with each representing approximately 41,000 population. The federal government has 295 divisions representing approximately 90,000 population. It is believed that electoral divisions should be based upon the population within a division and that that be the number of electors, in line with what Mr. Tom Sigurdson had stated, representing population not just electorate. The recommendation for that is that the Act be amended to set the number of divisions by population and that the average population per division be 45,000.

Recommendation 3 is that the Act be amended to provide more defined reasoning for an exemption to the 25 percent above or below rule on population variances to each division. Basically, it says that section 19 provides for exemptions, but to avoid a successful challenge under the Charter, more defined reasoning should be given. The implication of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for electoral boundaries and the distribution of constituencies is to review the meaning and intent of the Constitution. Until the Supreme Court of Canada has made a Charter ruling, a decision by a provincial court in British Columbia may or may not affect a court decision in Alberta. Then we get into a lot of esoteric reasoning which I'm not going to . . .

Recommendation 4 is that the Act be amended as per recommendation 3, taking into consideration those points outlined. Basically, all that means is that in terms of whatever specifics that the Charter - that would be defined under that. No particular Act.

So that's basically the city's brief, and you can have a copy of it.

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

Just a couple of comments before we start with questions. When we talk about distribution, Alberta traditionally has based its distribution on enumerated eligible voters. When we looked at the first set of slides, if we use the enumeration figures from 1986, our average was 18,685 per riding. Then if you factored the plus/minus 25 percent, it went from 14,000 to 23,000. In Tom's presentation, if we went to full population as other jurisdictions have done, that moved our mean to 28,504, with a top average of 35,000 down to 21,000. The distribution based on full population seems to be more commonly used in other jurisdictions than eligible voters. That's certainly been something that we have heard throughout our travels.

I was just going to lead off with a question. I guess I'm going to ramble on.

MR. CARBERY: I'll probably be rambling back.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Jim, you mentioned that you felt there was possibly too much emphasis being placed on the McLachlin ruling from British Columbia. Does the city feel that we should be ignoring that ruling?

MR. CARBERY: No, the city does not feel that you should be ignoring that ruling. They're just making the point that it may or may not apply if it went to the Supreme Court. At least that's what my understanding is. I'm quite sure you're in a better position than us to decide what the position would be.

MR. SIGURDSON: I believe our understanding is that because there wasn't any further challenge or appeal, the decision in

British Columbia has set precedence, and we've got to respond to it. Anything that we do here, if it doesn't somewhat conform to the decision in British Columbia, would as well be subject to a challenge.

MR. CARBERY: We understand that.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah, just a couple of questions. Are you saying, then, that all of the constituencies should be roughly the same in terms of population?

MR. CARBERY: Yes, that's what the brief is saying.

MR. BRUSEKER: And you're suggesting that they be about 45,000 population on average?

MR. CARBERY: That's what - yes.

MR. BRUSEKER: Doing a little quick number-crunching, that suggests that the Legislature would be reduced to approximately 52 or 53 members. The impact of that, I would suggest, would mean that some of these rural constituencies would grow substantially. For example, Lesser Slave Lake, which is already one of the larger - not as large as Fort McMurray - could be combined with Athabasca-Lac La Biche to achieve that kind of a number. Now, that would obviously be a worst case scenario. Did the city consider that at all or address that issue at all? Because some of the rural constituencies would become much larger. They would have to become much larger than they are.

MR. CARBERY: Well, I really don't understand myself where that particular line of reasoning came from. I know that on one side we're saying that in a constituency such as this the MLA has a terrible time, first of all, to cover the geographic area. And if the MLA is fortunate enough to be given a cabinet position, which I'm sure the constituents would hope for, he or she is in a worse position, because in a cabinet position a lot of their time then has to be to look after their department, and then they get a lot of complaints from their constituents because they're not spending enough time. So the poor MLA; he or she can't win. The question of travel in a constituency such as this is a very difficult one. I don't know, really, what the answer to that is. I don't think a lot of people fully appreciate the demands on the MLA to service a constituency of this particular size. So I really don't know what the reasoning behind that particular point was.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. It just seems to me that a constituency the size of Lesser Slave Lake and Athabasca-Lac La Biche combined would be impossible, unless you've got somebody who travels much faster than most aircraft do.

MR. CARBERY: Well, you might try like they're doing in Northern Ireland: a little bit of gerrymandering, and put a whole crew there and, you know, make a big dent somewhere else.

MR. BRUSEKER: All right. That was my only question. Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Tom, do you have any

questions?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes. One of the luxuries, I suppose, that we have as a committee is that we don't just have to deal with recommendations to the Legislature for the commission; we can make recommendations to other committees to consider. One of the recommendations might be to Members' Services that extra funds be made available to large rural constituencies so that a second office might be established. Do you think that would be helpful to the Fort McMurray constituency?

MR. CARBERY: Yeah. I think that any MLA should have the necessary resources to service the constituency.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

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

Thank you very much, Jim. We really appreciate your presentation. And you've got one from . . .

MR. CARBERY: This is only a short one.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: . . . economic affairs?

MR. CARBERY: No, the economic development board. I'll read this one quickly.

The city of Fort McMurray's economic development board is pleased to have the opportunity to make the following submission to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries.

The Board has a concern regarding the issue of equal representation for the rural electorate. We consider Fort McMurray to be comprised of rural electorate, as in Grande Prairie. This concern is primarily derived from two issues: one, urban/rural electoral representation; two, disproportionate representation within the rural electorate.

With respect to the first issue, urban/rural representation, we believe that the current practice of equally dividing the urban/rural representation should continue. Although there is disproportionate representation by electorate with this practice, it is the only way in which the rural electorate can gain a strong enough voice to be heard. The job of a rural MLA is a difficult task, as he serves many individuals employed in diverse industries and living in a variety of locations and conditions. We would suggest that the task of representing a rural electoral division is no less than representing an urban electoral division with a larger electoral population.

The issue of disproportionate representation within the rural electorate division is an immediate concern. There is currently a larger disparity between rural representation in southern Alberta and northern Alberta. Alberta's eight southernmost rural electoral divisions have a total electorate which is 28 percent less than Alberta's eight northernmost rural electoral divisions. The electoral divisions in question are tabled in appendix A. This disparity results in a per capita representation which favours rural southern Alberta over rural northern Alberta. In order to equalize this representation of electorate, northern Alberta must receive an additional three electoral divisions or, alternatively, southern Alberta must decrease by two electoral divisions. Such equalization is essential to ensure that northern Alberta enjoys the same benefits and attention as southern Alberta. One suggestion which would ensure that

these issues are alleviated would be to equally divide the representation between rural and urban electorate as is currently done, and then ensure equal representation of the rural electorate.

The views expressed above are those of the Fort McMurray economic development board and as such do not necessarily represent those of the Fort McMurray city council.

Thank you very much for providing this opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the board at 743-7883, which means I am not particularly able to answer any questions you may have regarding it.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Jim. I guess we'll accept the report as tabled and pass it on.

MR. SIGURDSON: Can we send a copy of that down to the Pincher Creek group?

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Maybe we could request the economic development group from Fort McMurray to do that.

MR. CARBERY: Also, I have to go to an economic development board meeting, if I could be excused, please.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thanks for coming in, Jim.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Jim. We appreciate your coming out tonight.

Clifford, can we proceed with you?

MR. GRANT: Sure. I'm the messenger, not the message. I'm representing the chamber. This presentation has been written by the president, and signed by Lyle. Lyle said: "I'm going to be out of town on Monday. Can you do my job for me?" So I said, "Sure." There are things in here I never even knew existed; I've never heard of Fitzgerald or Hay Camp or Peace Point, but I'm told they're part of this constituency. So I guess after living here 13 years, there still are things I can learn about.

The major thrust of this is that we feel our MLA has to be available and accessible, and right now it's virtually impossible, for reasons which have already been stated. So the chamber of commerce is saying simply: we need two MLAs. Lyle has not told me how we're supposed to have two, so I cannot address that. I do know that a number of personal friends have said that that, being available, is simply a problem in this constituency, because of the size of it. We in Fort McMurray, of course, are more fortunate, but for people in outlying areas it's just posing quite a problem. So that's essentially what we have to say.

Even though, as I say, it's Clifford Grant here and Lyle signed here, I'm not schizophrenic; I'm just the messenger. You'll note on there that we have 75 years of experience behind that. I hope you'll take that into consideration.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Your 75th anniversary. Well, congratulations.

MR. GRANT: Thank you. And that's a little bit older than I am.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: A lot.

MR. GRANT: Thank you very much.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Clifford, you should know there are 19 electors in Fitzgerald.

MR. GRANT: Nineteen? Where is it?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: It's right up just south of the Territories border.

MR. GRANT: Oh. Okay.

MR. SIGURDSON: Clifford, did the chamber have any recommendation with representation by population, do you know?

MR. GRANT: I have to be honest, no. This is going to sound a little funny. I am the president-elect of the chamber, but we have not discussed this in any detail.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm wondering if you could go back to the chamber and ask what the position would be on representation by population only. Here you've looked at seeing it necessary or desirous to have two members of the Legislature, which would make a constituency's voter size approximately 10,000. We did a little calculation on constituencies based on 12,000. It was a recommendation that came out of Cardston, and I did some quick number-crunching at the table there. We ended up with almost 30 MLAs in Edmonton and 30 MLAs in Calgary, and we would end up with well over a hundred MLAs in our province. So I'm just wondering if you could take back the question to the chamber: to consider representation by population, knowing the consequences of that, and at the same time requesting, perhaps, consideration for two MLAs. I'd be interested in having a bit of a follow-up, if that's possible.

MR. GRANT: Sure.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Clifford, can I just ask you a question? When I look at the numbers on this sheet, according to the 1989 voters list Fort McMurray had 20,385 voters, which places them just a little bit above the mean for the province. If we then transcribe that over to the population, based on the 1986 census, it moves Fort McMurray into just above the 25 percent variance, with a population of 37,935. If we use full population, the mean is 28,504. So in both cases, based on eligible voter or population, you're not that far off from the mean. Would the chamber be suggesting that because of the size of the riding it would warrant additional representation?

MR. GRANT: Yes.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: So are you suggesting that factors other than strictly population need to be recognized and brought into place when we're looking at distribution?

MR. GRANT: Right. I think that's in the second sentence of the first paragraph. It talks about the availability to the constituents.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: I think Fort McMurray is the largest riding in area?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: It is the largest.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: The largest, at 117,000 square kilometres. That's pretty big. Now granted, most of the population is within the Fort McMurray area, but it is a very large riding to get around. So you feel that - I'm not trying to put words in your mouth - the chamber's position would be that other factors should be considered for distribution besides population?

MR. GRANT: Sure. Definitely. Because, for example, on any given weekend our MLA can only go to so many communities. I mean, it's just physically impossible to do otherwise. You spend four or five hours traveling, and some places are only accessible at certain times of the year. And they do have a right to have the representative be there. So this is not - it's just simply size.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: We heard a formula in Slave Lake that took into account the number of voters, the number of square miles, the number of communities, the IDs, and the number of kilometres to and from Edmonton. All of these added up to points and provided a possible calculation for determining distribution. Is that more or less what you're looking at?

MR. GRANT: I'm not touching that with a 10-foot pole. I think sometimes we can become so complicated with what we're doing, we lose sight of what we are about. I remember for a long time hearing about organizational sclerosis, and I try to avoid that like the plague. Sure, we can get into all these kinds of pros and cons and everything else, and I'm not sure we have accomplished very much except letting the statisticians do some work.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: You're probably very right.

MR. GRANT: Yeah, not being a statistician.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: We've had quite a few combinations actually come forward.

MR. GRANT: I'm sure. So basically it's size.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BRUSEKER: I want to throw a potential scenario out to you and just get your reaction. We'll forget about the chamber of commerce for just a moment now.

MR. GRANT: Good.

MR. BRUSEKER: Let's suppose we take that argument and say, okay, in the Fort McMurray constituency we will give an MLA simply to the city of Fort McMurray and then we'll have another MLA for the rest of the constituency. Of the constituency of Fort McMurray, about 90 percent of the population is in Fort McMurray, probably another 5 percent is in Fort Chip, and the other 5 percent is spread amongst all the rest of the area. Do you think that is an appropriate division? I mean, I don't want to knock the people who are up here in Fitzgerald, but I guess my question is: how often does your MLA need to



get up into Fitzgerald to see those 19 electors? Is it financially worth while, and are the needs of those people such that they need to see their MLA that often? I mean, Fort McMurray city has the greatest bulk of the population.

MR. GRANT: I think what we would like to say is: have a dual constituency. Being from the maritimes, I'm used to that; it has been a very common practice that there are two.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do you mean a two-member constituency?

MR. GRANT: Right.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Prince Edward Island still does.

MR. GRANT: In my experience in Nova Scotia, it always worked very well. But not being there now – being here – I do not know how it's going now. We would not suggest that it be Fort McMurray and then the outside area. No, no. Because that would be very comfortable for the city representative and very uncomfortable for the rural representative.

MR. BRUSEKER: The only reason I made that as a possible suggestion is that that would make Fort McMurray city comparable to some of the other city constituencies within Edmonton and Calgary, for example, based upon their population, which is why I threw that out as a possible scenario.

MR. GRANT: However, if tourism increased to the point that our population would increase, then sure, we'd look at that.

MR. BRUSEKER: Oh, yeah. If you add another 20,000 electors in here, by all means, let's make two constituencies. I have a little problem with the suggestion as you're making it now, however.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Did you want to comment?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I believe that the dual-member constituency, other than for Prince Edward Island – is that where you're from?

MR. GRANT: No; Nova Scotia.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, other than maybe in Nova Scotia as well. In British Columbia that was Justice McLachlin's ruling, that we couldn't have two-member constituencies, which makes it difficult to take something that was ruled upon and try and revert back to that. I know that it's constitutionally permissible in P.E.I., and it may very well be in Nova Scotia.

MR. GRANT: At one point our Premier was in a dual constituency, and that proved for a lot of interest.

MR. SIGURDSON: The entire P.E.I. Assembly is dual-member?

MR. GRANT: Right.

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

MR. GRANT: You people are doing very well, considering the fact that I'm just a messenger. Boy, wait till I get Lyle tomorrow.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you very much, Clifford, and we appreciate . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, we didn't shoot the messenger anyway.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. GRANT: That's right.

MR. SIGURDSON: And we appreciate the message.

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

Ann, would you like to make your presentation?

MS DORT-MacLEAN: Yes, I would. One of the disadvantages of being this far down the line is that they've stolen a lot of my thunder. You'll just have to bear with me while I try not to repeat myself.

Representation by population is an interesting concept and is terribly democratic and all that. I don't know if you'd want to look at the individual ridings and what that would mean. The city of Fort McMurray is an incredibly young city. The average age is – what? – 24?

MR. GRANT: I think it's 27 now, Ann.

MS DORT-MacLEAN: Twenty-seven? So the majority of our representation by population is going to be below that 18-year level. So while you can say yes, I philosophically agree with representation by population, I think you do have to look at the demographics of each individual constituency and see how that would translate.

We are a large riding in size, and I think if you have a look at the federal riding of Athabasca, it puts the size of the Fort McMurray provincial riding into some sort of perspective in that Athabasca riding is terrifying in scope. Yet they have one MP whose responsibility it is to cover that territory and to meet those needs. I don't see a problem. I can see that it's a hardship for one elected member to travel and to meet those needs, but that's the nature of the job. I think that we can get along with one elected MLA, provided he or she does their job adequately or to the best of their ability.

I think there should be additional consideration given to the size of a riding, and that could translate into regional offices or additional assistance or whatever that professional help is that's necessary for them to serve that function. I would have a lot easier time accepting that than you guys giving yourselves another 30 percent raise for overwork. But that's a whole other issue that we won't get into.

Despite the size of our riding and the diversity of the riding, it's a very, I think, "together" riding. We're starting to work together as a region. The city of Fort McMurray is working with Fort Chip in the outlying areas on road development, on tourism, and whatnot. I wouldn't like to see a division that would break that up. I know that in the last election, the boundary changes where Westlock became a part of the federal Athabasca riding, the people in Westlock – I was down there doing some work – were just confused because they had been

changed and bumped around three or four different times so that they didn't know what riding they belonged to anymore. And I think that breeds a resentment on their part: nobody wants us, so now we're here, now we're there. So I think you have to be careful about breaking a riding up, especially if it's working well together as a region.

The rural versus the urban: Fort McMurray is both, so I'd echo what the city's presentation said about getting rid of that. I think the needs of an individual, whatever their area – be they 19 or 1,900 – are equal. I think the people in those outlying areas that may only have 19 people living there are as necessary or as important as another centre that may have 1,900. Those people have to have access to their representative, and that representative has to be visible and has to be visibly meeting their needs and their concerns. So I don't think you have a look at the size and say, "Well, there are only 19 up there; how often do they have to see their MLA?" They have to see him; they have to know that he or she is there and is working for them. I don't think they can be ignored.

The real reason or the most stressing reason I came this evening to do a presentation is that I think we have a lot of loopholes in our existing electoral system in the province, and I'll be very specific about that. I don't think we're adequately training our election officials. Chipewyan Lake in the last provincial election did not get a ballot box. I think that is totally unacceptable. It may be that the individual who was hired and trained went to Edmonton and forgot to return or didn't get back. I don't care what the reason; that is totally unacceptable. Those people were entitled to have the option to vote. They deserved that ballot box. Now, whether they all chose to go and vote or not is another issue; the box should have been there. So I think we have some holes to sort out and to close in that area. I think we have to make it that every eligible voter has the right and has the ability to get to the ballot. If they choose not to, unfortunately that's their decision.

Another area that I think needs immediate attention is the issue of construction workers. The nature of the job is that they have to travel to work, and they are putting a lot into the coffers of the province in the way of taxes. We have work camps out at Syncrude and Suncor that if there's a shutdown going on – and even if there isn't a shutdown going on – there are workers living out there. Every election we have gone through this – for the last three or four – where those people are being basically denied their vote because they're not in the riding where they live, and it's got to stop.

**MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN:** Ann, on these concerns, have you communicated those through your returning officer?

**MR. LEDGERWOOD:** I can address both those issues.

**MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN:** Can you address them? Have you sent some of your concerns in?

**MS DORT-MacLEAN:** We've dealt with Mr. – yes, but it's something . . . I think this committee should maybe make some serious recommendations, because there are holes in our current system, and I think they have to be addressed. There is a precedent. Right now students have the option of voting in the riding where they reside or where their parents reside or in the riding where they're going to school. They're given that option.

**MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**MS DORT-MacLEAN:** And students at that particular point in their lives are taking from the system. Construction workers at that point in their lives are giving into the system, and yet they don't have that same option. I have some real problems with that. So I would strongly recommend that this group have a serious look at it and make some recommendations.

Tom, you mentioned earlier that you have a lot of constituents from your riding who work in McMurray, and you know how hard it is to get their votes down there.

**MR. SIGURDSON:** You bet.

**MS DORT-MacLEAN:** So I think that Fort McMurray is a large riding; I would recommend that there should be additional consideration for the size. I think it can be adequately served with one elected member, given the fact that you have an effective elected member.

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

Are there any questions?

**MR. BRUSEKER:** Just sort of one comment. I noticed you made a comment earlier on that it should be – I believe you said "total population." I notice that there are 17,000 people who are not on the electors list. If you just subtract the difference between the two figures, one of total population – there are a lot of kids up here.

**MS DORT-MacLEAN:** Yes, there's an awful lot of kids up here.

**MR. BRUSEKER:** Either that or a lot of immigrants. I don't know which.

**MS DORT-MacLEAN:** No, there are a lot of children up here. It's a very young community; Fort McMurray is, yes.

**MR. BRUSEKER:** I don't know if I'm putting words in your mouth, but am I hearing you say that at least in terms of electoral boundaries, things are pretty well okay the way they are in terms of Fort McMurray?

**MS DORT-MacLEAN:** I think they are. I think that as a region it works well together and that it is workable. I could see that the last change, where they took Lac La Biche and made it part of Athabasca, made sense, because that's a farming area, and their concerns . . . Sort of having Lac La Biche as part of Fort McMurray was a bit odd, just trying to juggle just what the interests are and the needs in the area. But I think that the Fort McMurray riding is very workable as is.

**MR. BRUSEKER:** That's all I wanted to ask. Thank you.

**MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN:** Pat, could you . . .

**MR. LEDGERWOOD:** I can just address the point on Chipewyan Lake. It had nothing to do with the training of the election staff. They were properly trained. They had a ballot box; they had the ballots. It was a decision of the particular individuals to . . . I think Red Deer is where they went.

One of the interesting things is there was not one complaint. It was only at 9:30 at night when the returning officer kept calling to get the results that she found out from one of the natives there that her colleague had decided to go to Red Deer rather than conduct the poll.

MS DORT-MacLEAN: I agree that maybe the training may have been there, but somehow or other that individual didn't get the importance of what they were trained to do. So that's an area that has to be worked on, because that's totally unacceptable.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: It's unique in the annals, as far as I'm concerned.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Any other questions, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: No. I'm fine, thanks.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ann. We appreciate your presentation.

Maybe we could proceed. Wayne, have you got a presentation?

MR. MADDEN: Yes, I do, Madam Chair. My perspective is this: of a citizen to whom participation in the political system is very important. I don't just vote: I participate with political parties, I participate with political action groups, and as a school teacher I encourage my students to work towards the same kind of activity.

There are a number of factors which I believe have to be considered, and on the outset I want to say yes, I agree with the 25 percent plus or minus for constituencies. But I think we also, for example, have to consider the geography of a constituency. Our four northern constituencies are very large already. We have very poor roads in large parts of our constituencies or no roads at all. Many of our communities are isolated, and you can only get in there by bush plane.

In addition to that, we have seasonal factors such as winter and spring which cause extra work for an MLA or for people who are working in trying to get a party message at election time out to that constituency. So this is important, and something I'm going to propose in a few minutes.

Yes, population is important. I prefer that we go by population than by electors. Again, as a school teacher I believe that Mr. Weiss, for example, represents each one of my students as much as he represents me.

There is, however, the concern that I've had about Alberta elections, and I have done studies. As a matter of fact, there's a copy of a book I've done, *Canadian Guide of Electoral History and Leadership*, in the Legislature Library. Alberta by tradition has a habit of electing governments by extremely large majorities, many of these majorities in which the governing party has had more than 90 percent of the seats in the Legislature. And yet only on two, possibly three, occasions has the government received more than 60 percent of the vote, and that's the Conservatives in 1975 and 1982, and the Liberals, possibly, in 1905. Even in the last provincial election, in which our governing party received only 44 percent of the vote, they still managed to win 71 percent of the seats in the Legislature, which is almost as big a majority in terms of percentage of seats as the Mulroney government won in 1984 with 50 percent of the vote.

In order that the representation in the Legislature be more democratic, I believe there has to be introduced some form of proportional representation. Now, I agree that it is not possible to have proportional representation where all members are elected and then be able to ensure that individual areas of the province receive good representation, but I do believe we can move to a system, which I believe is similar to the system in West Germany, in which half our members would be elected from constituencies and half our members would be elected by proportional representation on the basis of lists submitted by the parties. Other candidates or independents or nonaligned could submit their names to the returning officer and be on the list as well. I'd ask that the commission consider such a system.

The question has been raised: when a constituency grows, should they be able to have two members or should we split the constituency? I would like to echo the views presented by the city and by Ms Dort-MacLean that splitting this constituency in the middle, or even, as one may have suggested, dividing the city in half when you split this constituency, breaks up this constituency in a very artificial way and I don't think is going to improve quality of representation. My own feeling is that when an electoral commission makes up boundaries, they should be able to project what is going to happen within a riding in the next four to eight years. For example, if OSLO is approved, the commission should be able to plan this riding perhaps with a smaller size in view of the fact that within the four- to eight-year period this constituency will be in existence, it's going to have a much larger population. They should be able to plan that. Now, if OSLO's still something that could happen, they can't do that. It has to be on the basis of those projects and those things that are going to happen.

I'm not sure whether this is part of the concern of your committee, but I'd like to raise this anyway. I believe the vote should be extended to those people who are inmates in jail who are normally residents of Alberta - or in mental institutions, provided they are, of course, certified competent to vote. I believe there's already been a court ruling in Manitoba in which the vote was so extended. I think we should extend the vote here in Alberta as well.

The other factor that has to be considered as well in dividing constituencies up is the needs of the people within that constituency. Up here in the north we have a very high native population with unique needs. Northeastern Edmonton has very different needs than, say, the people in northwestern or south Edmonton. So there has to be some care taken that the borders can be adjusted according to the needs of constituents. I suppose it is even more important to stress that every precaution must be taken that the Electoral Boundaries Commission is definitely nonpartisan. I know, for example, in California they've got some very strangely divided ridings to ensure that certain members are re-elected to Congress, and I think we have to protect against that happening here.

Thank you very much.

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

Could we take a brief moment from Wayne's presentation?

We're very pleased tonight that we have the MLA for Fort McMurray with us. We're very pleased to have the Hon. Norm Weiss. Thank you very much, Norm, for coming out tonight.

MR. WEISS: Thank you. I must apologize to your committee and to those presenting briefs and others that I was late because

there was another function, but I had indicated – I hope that message was relayed. I apologize. It was not that I didn't want to be here, but as others know, you can't sometimes be three places at once and spread yourself that thinly. So thank you very much for the opportunity.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Now, are there any questions of Wayne? Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Wayne, at one point early in your presentation I think you were arguing representation by population, which is a rather objective method by which you can establish constituency boundaries. Later on you seemed to be arguing representation by need, which is entirely subjective. Norm may have a very good argument for the need of four or five MLAs in the northeastern part of our province, and I may have a poor argument for the need of one MLA in my constituency. I'm wondering what the bottom line is, I guess. I'm wondering what the choice is. Is it rep by pop, or is it rep by some other formula?

MR. MADDEN: Madam Chair and Tom, the bottom line is rep by pop, but you want to ensure that the people within a riding have common interests. In other words, you don't go mixing interests up, as much as possible. In other words, there has to be some common community within a riding. Again, of course, the bottom line is rep by pop, yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: On that point, Wayne, are you saying that where there's a cultural or traditional or heritage factor that may be involved within a community – I'm thinking of Cardston; the community of Cardston is a very old, established community that has a tremendous amount of culture and heritage – it should be maintained as much as possible?

MR. MADDEN: As much as possible, yes. Now, we can't live in a perfect world, but the idea is that these are guidelines we work with.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

Frank, do you have anything?

MR. BRUSEKER: No, nothing to offer to that.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I'd like to just clarify a couple of points, Wayne. First of all, we have treatment centre polls. We're far more advanced than Manitoba in that particular area. Also, we have prisoners in remand who may exercise their franchise if they wish. Only those that are sentenced . . .

MR. MADDEN: Could I ask you a question? Not those that are sentenced though? I'm proposing that it be extended to those who are sentenced.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. I just wanted to clarify those two points.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much, Wayne. We appreciate you coming out tonight and

appearing before us.

Arthur.

MR. AVERY: Madam Chairman and members, I guess I'm coming at it from a little different point of view. I'm a 25-year-plus resident of Fort McMurray. I remember the days of having an MLA in Lac La Biche who didn't get up, to put it bluntly, the main reason being that the only way he could get up from Lac La Biche was by train, some eight hours travel and a wait from – what was it? – Tuesday evening until Friday morning to go back eight hours on the train. So I'm coming at it from a human point of view.

Present representation now shows bias towards Edmonton and Calgary when the MLAs band together to be heard. If realignment according to population occurs, the strength of these cities most certainly will increase. At present this riding encompasses a very large area. The distance from the Legislature in itself makes it difficult for the MLA to give the personal touch the urban MLA considers normal. If some of the far-removed rural ridings were forced to enlarge their area to fit this representation by population, the affected MLAs would be even less able to meet and work with their constituents. I feel that a move towards redistribution by population will create a type of second-class citizen in Alberta. My grandfather came to Alberta, then the Northwest Territories, to get his family away from this type of situation in northern Ontario. They had circuit judges and circuit lawyers. They even had circuit ministers of the cloth. Are we going to have to go back 90 years in time and have circuit MLAs to cover the rural ridings? Let us leave the urban/rural riding distribution as it is, and by that I mean the ratio. However, if there must be a change, then split this riding in two, which would help give our constituents the access to our MLA that urban constituents take for granted.

I've been in this constituency, as I say, for quite some time. At one time we had an average age under the voting age, if you please, and it's a very young community. But by being a young community, there are a lot more concerns. You've heard a lot of them tonight: education and hospitals. Now our concerns are going into long-term care, because we are starting to get the people that are calling Fort McMurray home and their parents are coming here to retire. So we have a lot of concerns. And that goes for Fort Chipewyan. It goes for Fitzgerald. It goes for Hay Camp. They need to see their MLA. I've known Norm for darned near as long as I've been in Fort McMurray, and I know he gets spread quite thinly at times in trying to cover the constituency and take care of their concerns as he does and still be part of the cabinet. So yes, I understand only too well the distribution by population, but there has to be a human element in there somewhere.

Thank you.

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

Are there any questions? Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah, I'm going to start with one. When a constituent, regardless of where they reside in the province, brings a problem to the MLA, I think you would agree they should be heard.

MR. AVERY: Uh huh.

MR. SIGURDSON: Would you agree, then, that for an MLA

who has 31,000 constituents or in the high 20s – and there are a number of constituencies that have that – they may have a more difficult time hearing the constituents that have problems as compared to constituencies that have under 10,000?

MR. AVERY: Not necessarily so. Hearing and getting into the area and reacting are two different things.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

MR. AVERY: You can hear a person, but then taking it one step further, you might not be listening to them. One thing I've got to say is that when you come into the community or into Fort Chip or wherever, you're hearing their concerns, you're seeing their concerns, and then you react.

MR. SIGURDSON: But there are often times, whether one is in the remote part of Alberta or in the inner city of Calgary or Edmonton, that the resolution of the problem isn't made either in the remote part of the province or in the inner city. The resolution is through accessing the proper program for the individual, and while it's nice to have the face-to-face contact, the resolution of the individual's problem may be through phoning the bureaucrat.

MR. AVERY: I agree with you there, but what percentage of the problems are resolved over the phone and what percentage has to be one-on-one?

MR. SIGURDSON: An urban member might argue that the majority of their problems are resolved over the telephone because they haven't the time, because of the size of their voter population, to go out and see all their constituents. Just to take a look at the map of the constituency – do you have this package before you?

MR. AVERY: I haven't got it before me. I have got it.

MR. SIGURDSON: Let me just hand it to you. If you look at, say, the Ponoka-Rimbey or Lacombe constituencies, Lacombe in terms of its height from south to north is about the same distance as the city of Edmonton. It has a voter population, I think, of about 14,000 people. Would you make an argument or a case that this constituency not be changed? Or would you argue that inside a number of these constituencies highlighted in pink there's room for, I would argue, some rather drastic change? I'm just wondering what you would argue.

MR. AVERY: Well, if you take in the human factor, you have to take in the previous submission. Is the cultural background, for example, of Lacombe and Ponoka such that it could be melded together? Is it all farming community? Does it still give that human touch to it? In that particular situation you're sitting with a relatively small driving distance in comparison to, for example, either Peace River or Fort McMurray or, for that matter, Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. SIGURDSON: Maybe just one final question, then, Madam Chair. Currently, as you pointed out, we have a pretty even ratio between urban and rural constituencies: 42 urban, 41 rural. Rural Alberta is going through some depopulation. McMurray, I suppose, because of its designation as a rural constituency, is the anomaly or is unique in that it's growing.

But currently the weight between rural and urban Alberta is approximately 60-40, 40 percent being rural. Is there a point where you would make a change? If depopulation of rural Alberta continues, would you still argue that the seat proportion be 50-50?

MR. AVERY: It is a situation I don't have an answer for, but I feel very strongly about it. To me, the situation we face in western Canada as compared to central Canada in your federal politics could very well become a reality in provincial politics, with central Canada becoming Calgary and Edmonton rather than, say, Toronto and Montreal. I see where the strength can get too great. Yes, I believe there probably are more concerns, but are the concerns of the little fellow in the outback going to be looked after?

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MADAM ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Arthur. We appreciate it.

Have we got any more presenters? Norm, would you like to say a few comments, or do you have a presentation to make?

MR. WEISS: I don't think it would be fair, Madam Chairman, to come in at this point and try to expound on the merits or nonmerits of rural versus urban. I'm sure that those that are well represented from all sides here would have made those cases and their concerns known. I think that's really the purpose of your committee, to hear their concerns and not mine. Mine would be perhaps more biased, and I wouldn't want to try and influence any decisions.

I'd love to tell you the stories about having to make access to communities where in those days you had to pay for the plane out of your own pocket. Thanks to your former colleague and leader the hon. Grant Notley, who supported my motion at the time to see that rural representation could be made on an equal basis, where we could fund those constituencies that had to go to those areas. Before it was out of our pocket. When I say I'd love to tell you those stories – and I told you – there are many more. But the case, I'm sure, has been well known, and I'm not going to try and throw any flowers either way on it other than to say that, boy, it's a real world out there, and I can tell you a rural MLA sure knows it.

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

We've had a very interesting day. We were in Slave Lake earlier this afternoon and Fort McMurray tonight. I used to work for what used to be called Sun Oil and Great Canadian Oil Sands, so I was involved up in Fort McMurray quite a number of years ago. I was part of the group that merged Great Canadian Oil Sands with Sun Oil, so it kind of brought back some fond memories. But I have to admit Fort McMurray has certainly changed since I was up here last.

We've had some interesting presentations throughout the day. Last week we had some very interesting presentations down in the southern part of the province. We will be continuing on our way. For the rest of this week we're going to Viking and St. Paul and Donnelly, and then we go back to Red Deer, Hanna, Wainwright, Edmonton, and probably back to Calgary before we wrap up and before the session starts on March 8. So we're going to be on the road quite a bit.

We do appreciate your input. It's extremely valuable. We will

be writing a report once we're finished – soon – and we will be filing it in the Legislature sometime during the session. We have all your reports recorded, and if there's anything we can do, if you need copies of them or would like to have information, please feel free to contact Bob Pritchard and he'll see it is sent out to you.

Thank you for your hospitality and your kindness and for

having us in Fort McMurray. Sometime I hope we can come back and have a visit. Thank you very much.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thanks for coming out on such a crisp evening.

[The committee adjourned at 8:42 p.m.]