

[Acting Vice-Chairman: Mr. Sigurdson]

[2:03 p.m.]

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We'll declare the public hearings for the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries open in St. Paul. My name is Tom Sigurdson. Today I will act as the Chair of the committee. We'll just take a short break right at the very beginning to make sure everybody gets in and signed in.

We'll attempt again to get under way. I'm serving today as the Chair. Normally the Chair is Bob Bogle. He was snowed in at Milk River and couldn't attend the hearings yesterday. He'll be with us again tonight. Stockwell Day, who is the vice-Chair of the committee, is in Red Deer trying to sort out some problems that are going on in his neck of the woods, so today I'm here as your Chair.

What I'd like to do is introduce the committee members that have traveled with us, starting with, on my right, Frank Bruseker from Calgary-North West, and on my left, Mike Cardinal from Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

We've made it customary that when we're in an area where there's a local member of the Legislature, we invite those local members to come and sit with us at the table to receive your submissions and also to ask questions of you after your presentations. We're pleased to have Doug Cherry from the Lloydminster constituency with us today. Doug, welcome. Hope you'll enjoy today's activities.

Also with us is an ex officio member of the committee, Pat Ledgerwood. Pat is the Chief Electoral Officer for our province. He brings to us a wealth of experience. Pat was involved in the last redistribution provincially and was also involved in the federal redistribution a few years ago.

At the far end of the table and to my left is Bob Pritchard. Bob is the senior administrator for the select special committee, and he looks after us when we travel. The other person that looks after us when we travel and tries to make sure we're where we're supposed to be when we're supposed to be is Robin Wortman, who is at the door signing people in.

The other two people that are sitting at the end of the table are Gary Garrison and Doug Jeneroux. These two individuals are involved with the *Hansard* recording. In that this is a public hearing process, everything that is spoken here is recorded and then will be typed up into transcript form so that the record will be made public. That's what these microphones here are for; these microphones in front of us are not amplification microphones. This is the only amplification microphone, so when the presentation is being made, we will ask you to use this microphone at that end.

What I'll ask a couple of members of the committee to do – first I'm going to ask Pat Ledgerwood to explain the reasons why this committee has been struck, and those reasons are such that we are here today in St. Paul. So with that I'll just ask Pat Ledgerwood to take a few moments and explain to you the reason why we're going through this process.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Tom.

Ladies and gentlemen, normally at this stage we would have had a commission in operation which would have been redistributing our boundaries in that there is a requirement by legislation for a commission to be struck after every second general election. The last commission was in 1983-84. Since then, of course, we've had the '86 general election and the 1989 general election. The reason this committee was struck was to examine some of the legislation that will be necessary to keep us within

the Charter of Rights. I'd like to refer to what is called the McLachlin decision.

In that in British Columbia they had a great variance in the population in their electoral divisions – the lowest electoral division had just under 5,600 population; the highest had over 68,000 – the government of British Columbia struck a commission headed by Justice Fisher, called the Fisher commission. They spent a great deal of time traveling throughout the province consulting lawyers and politicians. They basically made three recommendations. First of all, they were going to eliminate all the dual ridings in British Columbia, increase the number of members in the Legislature from 69 to 75, and – the decision that impacts on us – they decided they would divide the total population by 75, which would give them an average for each of the 75 seats. They would then have electoral districts where the population was either plus or minus 25 percent of this average.

Professor Dixon took the B.C. government to court because he felt they didn't react quickly enough to the Fisher commission report. The case was heard before the Chief Justice of British Columbia, Madam Justice McLachlin. She basically agreed with the Fisher commission report that the Charter dictated that all votes be equal. She supported the commission's report on the average of plus or minus 25 percent. However, she said it was up to the Legislature to implement those provisions.

There was no appeal to the McLachlin decision. I don't know whether you are aware that Justice McLachlin has now been elevated to the Supreme Court of Canada; I don't know whether that had any impact on it or not. So Professor Dixon then took the B.C. government to court again because they didn't react to McLachlin's decision. The case was heard before a Justice Meredith. The court ruled it was not up to the court to legislate, that the court was not about to govern, and that they would not get into the political arena. However, they did request that the B.C. government react.

The B.C. government reacted by appointing a further commission, and they recommended 75 seats. They've drawn the boundaries, and all of the populations in those electoral divisions are plus or minus 25 percent from the average. The Bill was tabled on January 15 this year, and became law at the end of January. So that was the situation in British Columbia.

We don't know what impact it's going to have on Alberta, but the three House leaders got together and decided they should have a committee to travel throughout the province to get input and to review the situation in Alberta. This committee will be making recommendations to the Legislature at the spring sitting.

I'd be pleased to try and answer any questions you may have on the background I've provided.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions of Pat at the moment? No?

Most of you as you came in the door, or perhaps even before today, would have received in the mail a package of information from the special committee. It starts off with "Dear Albertan." There are a number of pieces of paper in there that contain a bit of information. We have some new information that we're using to update. What I'll ask Frank to do now is walk you through the package of information that's on the slides and also introduce you to the new material that's on the slides as well.

Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks, Tom.

The first bit is essentially what you see in the package, so I'll

try to go through it fairly quickly, and at the end if there are any questions, be sure to ask.

The first list you see on the overhead projector over on your right-hand side of the room is simply a list of the 83 constituencies in the province of Alberta as they are currently established. The number to the right of the name of the constituency represents the number of eligible voters that can be found in each of those constituencies, based upon the enumeration that occurred just prior to the last general election.

This is the same list once again, except that now instead of being in alphabetical order, the constituencies are arranged in numerical order, the largest being the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, having a voter population of 31,500, and the smallest being the constituency of Cardston, with a voter population of 8,100. Cardston is a little bit unique in that there were some 1,800 members of the Blood Indian Reserve that chose not to be enumerated. When the enumerators showed up at the reserve, they said, "Thanks, but no thanks." Even though they are technically eligible to be voters, they decided not to be enumerated. So the number of 8,100 could be adjusted upward by some 1,800 voters.

If you added all those numbers together, you'd get a total figure of about one and a half million voters for the province of Alberta. If you divide that by the current 83 constituencies, you arrive at an average figure of 18,685 electors per constituency. If you apply the 25 percent rule which Mr. Ledgerwood referred to earlier on, that means the upper end of the range which would be acceptable would be about 23,000 and the lower end of the range would be about 14,000.

Going back to that list we had before, we've now colour-coded the information. The information that is colour-coded green are those constituencies which would exceed the 25 percent maximum; in other words, larger than 23,000 voters per constituency. All of those are urban constituencies. If you look at the ones that are coloured pink, those were the constituencies that would fall below the minimum of the 25 percent, or less than 14,000 electors per constituency. The ones which are not highlighted at all are those which would fall within the range of 25 percent above or below the average. Representing this on a map of the province of Alberta, the pink-coloured constituencies are those which again are below the 25 percent. You can see that they are all rural, and they spread virtually over the entire province, north to south, east to west.

This particular map is the city of Calgary. The green-coloured constituencies again are those which exceed the 25 percent variation. Of interest here is that if you look at the map, both for this one and the next one, which is the city of Edmonton, you'll see it's primarily around the periphery where the city is growing and more people are moving into the area.

This is the city of Edmonton. Again you can see quite a number of constituencies coloured in green, indicating again over the 25 percent.

The city of Lethbridge is divided into two constituencies: Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West. They are not coloured on this transparency, which indicates they do fall within the 25 percent guidelines.

This is the city of Medicine Hat: by population currently the fourth largest constituency in the province, with almost 30,000 voters.

Red Deer is kind of a unique situation in the province of Alberta. At the last redistribution Red Deer was in the situation where it was really too large to be one constituency but not large enough to be divided into two constituencies just based

upon the city of Red Deer. The brown line which you see on the map on the overhead right now is the current boundary for the city of Red Deer. But as I said, Red Deer by itself did not have sufficient population, so in fact when the boundaries commission looked at the city of Red Deer, they added a piece of area around the outside which included most of Red Deer county and then, in fact, added some rural area to the city of Red Deer. So by producing Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South, you have constituencies which are primarily urban but also have a rural component to each of them.

This is the city of St. Albert, which is located just to the north and west of the city of Edmonton. Again, it exceeds the 25 percent guideline.

Once we started looking at some of the constituencies which were very far away from the averages, we looked at those that were more than 35 percent away from the provincial average of 18,000 electors per constituency. Those are shown on this map. The ones that are coloured purple are more than 35 percent away from the mean: less than 12,000 voters per constituency.

This particular map has five constituencies coloured in yellow. Those constituencies are more than 50 percent away from the average: less than 10,000 voters per constituency, so quite small constituencies in terms of the population.

The dots shown on this map indicate the places we have been or are planning to go. This evening, as our chairman mentioned, we're going on to the constituency of Vermilion-Viking, to the town of Viking, to receive input there. We're also going to a few more. I'm not sure if they've all been added on. We're going back to Donnelly, and we're going back to a few other places where we had a very strong turnout and, in fact, couldn't hear all of the submissions in one day. This is a list of all the hearings. We've added a few onto the end. Donnelly is a return trip; Edmonton is a return trip. All of the previous locations, of course, are places we have already been to. This particular map of Alberta simply shows where we have been and those constituencies which are very small compared to the provincial average. You can see that what we've attempted to do is try to hold hearings in those areas which could perhaps be most likely affected by any electoral redistribution.

All of the information we've just looked at was in the packages.

As a result of the hearings process, one of the questions that came up on a number of occasions was: "Why are you using eligible voters? What about total population?" So what we're going to show you now is a series of overheads that are very similar in terms of sequence, but instead of using eligible voters, we'll now look at population. The total population lists will vary from the eligible voters because, first of all, they will include all of the children, those that are 18 years of age and younger. If you are 18 years and younger, you can't vote, and yet as MLAs we represent all of our constituents, whether or not they voted for us and whether or not they're even old enough to vote for us. It also includes all of the landed immigrants that have come to Alberta, have settled here, but are not yet Canadian citizens. The total population would also include all of those Indian bands we talked about before that perhaps choose not to be enumerated, and yet as MLAs we are responsible for representing the needs and wishes of those individuals.

So if you look at the total population of the province of Alberta, it comes to slightly less than 2.4 million. Dividing that again by 83 constituencies, you get an average figure of 28,500 population - total population now - per constituency. Applying the 25 percent maximum upper limit, we'd get, then, an upper

limit of about 35,000; 25 percent down means a bottom-end limit of about 21,000. So the variation then would range from a high of 35,000 to a low of 21,000 per constituency.

This looks very similar to the one you saw earlier. Again the green is over 25 percent; the pink is less than 25 percent. The interesting thing that happens is that the green section in this instance has 18 constituencies in it. In that section in your package there are 19 that are coloured green. So there is one less. In the pink it becomes a little bit more significant. There are 22 names listed here, highlighted in pink, that are very small. In the package which you have, there are 24 names listed. The net effect, therefore, is that 43 constituencies now fall within the guidelines of 25 percent plus or minus, whereas in using the eligible voters only 40 fell within the guidelines of plus or minus 25 percent.

Putting it on the map of Alberta, you can see again some pink-coloured constituencies. But notice this map is different from the last one I showed you in that there are now two constituencies coloured green, the constituency of Grande Prairie and the constituency of Fort McMurray. That indicates those two are in excess of the plus 25 percent variation.

Now we're going to show you the maps of Edmonton and Calgary. Unless you have a photographic memory, you might just want to very quickly refer to the map in your package. This is the city of Calgary. The net effect is that we lose a couple and gain one constituency that is now coloured green. There's a bit of a shift. But, overall, as I said, there is a net decrease in terms of the number of constituencies coloured green. The same is for the city of Edmonton, which we'll put up right away here. The city of Edmonton: again a bit of a shift, primarily still around the periphery of the city where the population is growing and expanding and the city is growing and expanding.

This one is very significant. In your package that you have before you, the purple-coloured constituencies were those which were more than 35 percent away from the provincial mean. The same applies here. In your package there were 16 constituencies coloured purple, using the eligible voters list. Using the total population, there are only 12 constituencies that are more than 35 percent away from the mean. It gets even more dramatic on the next slide. The last time I showed you this slide, there were five constituencies that were more than 50 percent away from the mean. Now, using the total population, there is only one constituency, that being Pincher Creek-Crowsnest in the very southwest corner of the province. The net impact seems to be that using population, the changes that might need to be implemented could be less dramatic and less wide-ranging.

That's the last slide, I believe. If there are any questions, I'd be happy to attempt to answer them, if I haven't explained it clearly enough for you.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Any questions at this point? No?

There are two things I just want to briefly do before you get into the presentations. First off is that I neglected at the start to advise you that this is an all-party committee of the Legislature. It's made up of all three parties that are represented in the House. Today you have representation from all three political parties. Mike Cardinal is a member of the governing Progressive Conservative Party, as is Doug Cherry. Frank is a member of the Liberal opposition, and I'm a member of the New Democratic Party. So all parties are represented here today.

The other thing I want to advise you of before anybody starts

making their presentation is that this is the committee that will be making recommendations to the Legislature that in turn will be making recommendations or will be setting the guidelines for an Electoral Boundaries Commission. We will not be drawing any boundaries; that is not our task. So those of you who came here today with the thought that you would make presentations or representations about boundary changes and had some specifics to direct to us on that matter today, we will take the information if you have it in writing; otherwise, we're not going to take that information today. We will make sure it gets to the commission, but our role is to not look at boundary changes today.

We have 11, possibly 12, presentations to hear from, so I think the best thing to do is to ask Bob Pritchard to call them forward.

We'll just have people come over here for the first number of presentations. What we'll do is hear your presentations; if the committee has any questions, we'll ask those, and we'll see how it goes.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could do three at a time. The first three – if we could have Gerry Desaulniers and Darryl Poirier and Paul Langevin? Is Paul here?

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Gerry, if you'd like to start off?

MR. DESAULNIERS: Yes, thank you.

I come today on behalf of the St. Paul & District Chamber of Commerce, and I'm representing our president, Larry Langager, who had to be out of town today on other business.

The St. Paul & District Chamber of Commerce represents a membership in excess of 200 businesses, associations, and individuals comprising nearly half of all businesses operated in St. Paul and served by the chamber. St. Paul is a major trading centre in northeastern Alberta, and the chamber's members provide goods and services throughout a wide area. With two dozen federal and provincial government offices located within its town limits, St. Paul also serves as the regional government centre for northeastern Alberta.

As laudable as the principle of representation by population may be, we strongly believe, and this view is shared by many other organizations and people of our area, that there are many compelling reasons why that basic principle need not be and should not be followed blindly in Alberta. While recognizing that the present electoral structure appears on the surface to be somewhat inequitable and to enhance the power of rural voters at the expense of urban voters, we agree with the reasons cited by the Attorney General for British Columbia in the Dixon case as to why these disparities are justified and with Alberta's existing legislation, which takes into account many of the same factors, including special interests of rural residents, areas such as agriculture, conservation, protection of the rural environment, provision of services and transportation to smaller communities, where the same may not always be considered economically prudent from the point of view of urban voters. For example, who will protect our rivers and drinking supplies from further dumping of raw sewage into the North Saskatchewan River by the city of Edmonton if urban voters control a huge majority of seats in the Legislature?

Diversity of interests of the population. While not denying that urban members must serve many different interest groups, we submit that the problem is greater for rural members, who must deal with one or more counties or municipal districts,

numerous municipalities including several towns, villages, hamlets, summer villages, and unincorporated bodies, farming groups and the like, in addition to the usual assortment of community and ethnic groups with which urban members must deal, not to mention the added responsibility of members in ridings such as St. Paul who deal with the concerns of residents of Indian reserves and Metis settlements. Certainly such a wide range of groups requires rural members or other constituents to travel extensively. A rural member's duties in the Legislature and on various committees often render him unavailable to meet with his constituents. For example, urban members have little difficulty meeting constituents during weekdays when the Legislature is sitting, while rural members cannot and, because of travel requirements, cannot meet them on an evening before attending to Legislature business.

Lack of access to media. In order to get messages across to his constituents, a rural member may be required to deal with numerous small town weekly newspapers rather than one or two major daily papers.

Limited availability of resources and advisers. This is particularly difficult because rural members are often forced to be in Edmonton where they are not readily available to their constituents, or in their ridings where the resources and advisers are not as accessible to them.

Rural Alberta has always played an important role in the development of the province. Agriculture for many years was Alberta's largest industry and still plays a major role. Much has been said about the importance of maintaining the viability of rural Alberta and its many communities. Yet if a system of electoral boundaries based solely or primarily on representation by population without due recognition of the problems faced by rural Alberta is put in place, urban Alberta, primarily the two major cities, will be allowed to dominate the government's activities. Furthermore, it is evident that there will be in the future an even greater trend towards urbanization, which will further dilute the influence of rural Albertans and reduce their ability to guard against policies which are demanded by the majority, represented by urban voters, which may not be in the best interests of and even damaging to rural Albertans and, we suggest, in the long run to all Albertans.

All parties in Alberta and an overwhelming majority of Albertans support the concept of a Triple E Senate federally to protect the interests of the regions against selfish and uncaring policies of central Canada. Rural Albertans deserve the same type of protection. We believe the best way to ensure such protection is to retain a system similar to the present system in Alberta, where urban and rural ridings are more or less equal in number. Even if the committee determines that the number of urban ridings should, for reasons of greater fairness, exceed the number of rural ridings, we believe rural Albertans must be guaranteed a certain number or proportion of seats to eliminate the probability of further significant erosion of their effectiveness in decision-making.

The Supreme Court of British Columbia in the Dixon case rejected the principle of absolute equality of voting power and approved the setting of justifiable limits beyond which such equality could be eroded, such as the 25 percent limit applied in Canada federally. However, the federal system also recognizes the regional interests by guaranteeing a minimum number of seats for certain provinces and territories. Similarly, we believe Alberta should retain the present dichotomy between rural and urban seats. Voter equality can be achieved by retaining the existing 25 percent variation in urban ridings from the average

of all urban ridings and by applying the same limit to rural ridings, so that the electorate of no rural riding varies from the average of all rural ridings by more than 25 percent. If it is determined that the factor of variation must be applied to the average of all ridings as opposed to only urban or rural ridings, as the case may be, I believe a wider variation such as 35 percent should be applied at least to rural ridings. If this is not done, there will be considerable disruption to many existing ridings, and it may be unduly harsh if a number of ridings which have historically existed for many years must disappear under redistribution.

If it is considered necessary by the committee to swing the balance of seats in favour of urban voters because of their greater population, we suggest that this be done as much as possible by increasing the number of urban seats without decreasing the number of rural seats, as opposed to a direct trade-off of rural seats for urban seats. Such a course of action would not be our preferred choice, however, because of space limitations in the Legislature itself and because of the added costs of increasing the number of MLAs when Alberta already has more legislators than other more populated jurisdictions.

There are some other factors which also should be considered by the committee. Should ridings be based upon overall population rather than upon the number of electors? After all, members must serve the needs of all their constituents whether of voting age or not, and the use of total population figures may change the figure somewhat. We have a further concern regarding the accuracy of voters lists, which are of necessity often hastily prepared. Census figures may be more accurate, and in the case of Indian bands, some of which refused to be enumerated, band rolls may be more meaningful.

In structuring rural ridings following any redistribution, regard should be given to maintaining ridings in areas which contain a common trading centre. For example, it is incongruous that areas merely a few miles from St. Paul – such as St. Vincent, a small community near St. Paul, and many permanent residents of Vincent Lake – should be part of the Bonnyville constituency when they regularly shop and often live in St. Paul and have virtually no affinity to Bonnyville. The existing boundaries are often based largely on county boundaries, whereas trading areas would be more appropriate.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission should still retain the power to take into account projected voter or population growth in any area in establishing boundaries. For example, it is very likely that the effect of Bill C-31, recognizing the treaty rights of native women, and the agreement reached by the Alberta government with the Metis settlements will result in substantial population increases for reserves and settlements in the years to come. As previously indicated, the St. Paul riding, for one, has a significant native and Metis population.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Gerry.

Questions from the committee? No? Thank you.
Paul, if you would just take the microphone.

MR. LANGEVIN: Mr. Chairman, I have some copies for members of the commission if you'd like to follow as I read it.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. LANGEVIN: Mr. Chairman, members of the commission, on behalf of the town council of the town of St. Paul and my

fellow citizens, I would like to express our concerns over the possibility of changes to the provincial constituency boundaries. It is apparent that the strict application of the plus or minus 25 percent variation rule would result in additional ridings to our two major centres, namely Edmonton and Calgary, at the expense of rural ridings in northern, southern, and east-central Alberta. Therefore, the result would be more MLA representation in the urban centres and less representation for the rural areas.

Perhaps it would be in order for your committee to look at a two-tiered system regarding the number of constituents. In other words, maybe the magic figure could be 25,000 constituents for urban areas and 12,000 for rural areas.

Have we in the western provinces not petitioned our federal politicians for fairer representation at the federal level because of the area we represent? I suggest to you that if we reduced the representation from rural Alberta, we would have the same scenario in Alberta, with the controlling voting being held by two major centres. I believe our rural MLAs are already experiencing difficulties representing their constituents because of the large areas they represent. They have many more municipal councils, school boards, community associations to deal with than their urban counterparts. I further suggest that the interests of rural Alberta differ greatly from urban Alberta. Rural constituents are mostly employed in the primary industries such as oil and gas, agriculture, and forestry which are of provincial jurisdiction. If you were to poll our MLAs, you no doubt would find that MLAs in rural Alberta are petitioned more frequently than their urban counterparts, because rural constituents rely on their MLAs for information and assistance when dealing with government matters because they have less access to government services.

Because of the vast area we are dealing with, I do not believe it would be wise to reduce our rural representation. Further, when looking at rural constituencies, it appears to make common sense that rural ridings be established according to trading area, making MLAs more readily accessible to the populace. More specifically, constituents of St. Paul and area would not be prepared to accept the relocation of boundaries that would result in our MLA not being readily available to listen to our concerns.

As you may or may not be aware, St. Paul is the trading centre for northeastern Alberta, and we firmly believe St. Paul should remain as one of the rural areas represented in the Legislature of the province of Alberta.

Thank you very much for hearing us today.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Paul.

Questions from the committee?

Okay. Darryl.

MR. POIRIER: Mr. Chairman and hon. committee members, may I first thank you for this opportunity to bring to your attention some of the concerns of the people of St. Paul district regarding electoral boundaries. We represent a broad cross section of the population of this geographically very large riding. Our board of directors is comprised of all small businessmen, farmers, professionals, tradespeople, civil servants, and blue-collar workers from across the entire constituency.

Interestingly, when we polled this diverse group as to the single, most important concern that should be presented to you today, the answer was unequivocal. We were instructed to tell

you that our biggest concern in any electoral boundary reform is the maintenance of the agricultural nature of our constituency. Although our population is made up of many vocational pursuits, we all recognize that the root of our prosperity and our way of life is agriculturally based. For this reason, it is essential for the preservation of our well-being that our constituency remain comprised of agricultural areas so our MLA is free to represent agricultural interests in the Legislature without the conflict of interest that would be inevitable with our constituency being less homogeneous.

Because of our relatively sparse population, the riding is bound to be large, with large distances separating our people. This fact in itself makes it extremely difficult for an MLA to keep in close contact with his constituents. The incumbent spends up to 60 percent of his long days in travel both within the constituency and between the constituency and Edmonton. It is only because of the commonality of interests throughout the existing constituency and the fact that people from throughout the constituency regularly travel to St. Paul on business that he is able to do such a credible job of representing this area.

The town of St. Paul is a main trading centre for the northeast. In retail sales it rates with such larger centres as Spruce Grove, Drumheller, and Banff. It is certainly located and indeed draws substantial trade even from other agricultural constituencies, including Myrnam of the Vermilion constituency and Two Hills of the Vegreville constituency. In addition to the representation from all major farm equipment and automobile manufacturers, St. Paul has become the centre for mental health services in the northeast, and St. Therese hospital provides regional services to hospitals in the surrounding area. The new court house, provincial building, department of highways facility, new feed mill, and seed plant all provide regional services. Four major shopping malls serve the retail needs of the people. Extensive French, Ukrainian, and English cultural facilities also draw from throughout the agricultural community.

However, what is not immediately apparent from a map or from raw figures is the abrupt change in focus as one travels north and east from the existing constituency boundaries. And this brings us to the crux of our concern. As one moves towards Bonnyville, Grand Centre, Cold Lake, and Lac La Biche, the nature of activity and, consequently, of interest changes very quickly. While our people do participate competitively with these centres in the area of minor sports, there the commonality of interests stops.

Oil and gas, heavy oil, lumbering, and the Canadian Forces Base, Cold Lake dominate the economics of these areas. Their people have altogether different priorities. They think differently from our people – not that they are not good neighbours, we hasten to add, but their livelihoods come from different sources, so their priorities are different and often conflict with our own. It is therefore our great fear that the ill-advised change of electoral boundaries would result in our sharing an MLA who would then be in an impossible position of representing sharply divergent interests. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that a French-speaking farmer from St. Vincent has considerably more in common with a small businessman of Ukrainian heritage living in Two Hills than he does with a French-speaking serviceman in Cold Lake.

Clearly, if the people in northeastern Alberta are to be effectively represented in Edmonton, the agricultural homogeneity of our constituency must be maintained. For this reason, we ask of the committee to recommend that in the event a change in constituency boundaries becomes necessary, the boundaries of

the St. Paul constituency be adjusted to include only those agricultural communities whose people are already trading in St. Paul and whose interests and priorities already parallel our own.

It has been written that a man cannot serve two masters. Any adjustment to our riding which dilutes this agricultural makeup would place the MLA in an untenable position. Conversely, while a physically larger constituency would be harder to administer, grouping natural trading areas with a common economic base would permit our MLA to represent his constituency with one more voice.

Thank you for your consideration.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Darryl. Questions from the committee?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Darryl, you were representing which group?

MR. POIRIER: The St. Paul and district PC association.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, presenters. If we could get the next group of presenters up . . .

MR. PRITCHARD: Okay. Could we have Cary Smigerowski, Ed Stelmach, and Garth Leask?

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Cary, if you want to go ahead.

MR. SMIGEROWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the county of Smoky Lake, I'd like to make a presentation. This is a letter that is signed by the reeve of our county, Mr. Fred Moschansky.

On behalf of the council of the county of Smoky Lake, please accept this letter as their unanimous consensus of opinion on the issue affecting electoral boundaries legislation. The county understands the present dilemma of the special select committee as a result of the recent court decision of April 1989. The British Columbia Supreme Court ruled B.C.'s system of electoral boundaries violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but with the same breath the county understands that rural Alberta could face the prospect of decreased representation in the provincial Legislature as a result of the B.C. court case.

The definition of "democracy" as found in the Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary is as follows: "Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives." Nowhere in this definition is it said an elected official must represent the same number of persons. The county is very concerned that the very real possibility of reduction in rural representation may occur if the committee opts for a strict representation by population scheme and ignores the unique geographic, economic, and demographic circumstances of rural Alberta.

What the county would like at this time is to express our concerns to any reduced representation of rural MLAs in the provincial Legislature. Our concerns are, number one, that rural boundaries presently are very large in area, and to make them larger would in the theory of democracy decrease the availability of rural persons to a rural MLA. For example, in the Redwater-

Andrew constituency, MLA Steve Zarusky is accountable to seven rural municipal areas, being counties or municipal districts, and 10 urban municipalities, while in the city of Edmonton 17 MLAs are accountable to only one municipal council.

Two, in addition, related to the definition and/or theory of democracy, an urban MLA can knock on 10 doors in an hour but a rural MLA in most circumstances can knock on a couple of doors during the same time period. Every elector certainly should have equal access to elected representatives.

Three, a rural MLA has to travel a minimum of one to two hours and a maximum of five hours car travel or plane connections to meet with a group in their constituency, while an urban MLA, especially in the city of Edmonton, can be home every night.

Four, a rural MLA, because of the large geographic area, must employ a number of constituency offices, while urban MLAs have at most one constituency office and some MLAs, especially once again in the city of Edmonton, do not have one.

Five, one issue that to date has not raised its ugly head is the idea of different classing of rural and urban Alberta. As we have seen with the English-French issue and the disparity of federal seats between Quebec-Ontario and Alberta, the government is elected at times even before the Alberta federal vote is known. Constantly in the media and coffee talk we find that when there is not a degree of flexibility in a matter, true democracy or what is perceived by the public does not work.

In conclusion, the county of Smoky Lake strongly feels that there are only two scenarios that are acceptable. Number one, status quo: Alberta retains the present 42 rural seats and 41 urban seats. Should a court challenge arise, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms should be taken to task. Two, reform: institute a requirement that all constituencies must contain approximately the same number of eligible voters - currently there would be 17,000 - and allow for a variation of up to 25 percent. This would allow the province to maintain the current ratio of rural to urban seats.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the opinions of the county of Smoky Lake. Respectfully submitted, Fred Moschansky, Reeve.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Just before I turn to committee members for questions, I want to point out that I think there's one inaccuracy in that you suggested some urban MLAs don't have constituency offices. I don't know of any MLA in the province of Alberta, rural or urban, who does not have at least one constituency office. So I wanted that to be clarified.

MR. SMIGEROWSKI: I got that from an MLA, so . . .

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, I can show you the RITE directory.

Questions from the committee? Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Cary, I was just wondering a little bit about . . . Right at the end you said a provincial average of 17,000 - was it? - and that would maintain the ratio of approximately 50-50 in terms of 50 percent rural and 50 percent urban. I didn't quite understand how that might work.

MR. SMIGEROWSKI: Possibly the worst scenario is make the rurals slightly larger to make them more "equitable." But don't reduce the proportioning of seats. It would still be 42-41.

MR. BRUSEKER: But I think what would likely happen if we reduced the ratio and made it equal 17,000 to one right across the province: you could almost make two constituencies out of my one. You would therefore increase the total number of urban constituencies, primarily, of course, Edmonton and Calgary.

MR. SMIGEROWSKI: The main premise our submission is based on is that the number of rural seats not be diminished and the same ratio be kept. Primarily what we're trying to indicate here - and this is actually the feeling also of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties in some literature they have put out - is the plus or minus 25 percent, that you try to keep the rural representation to what it is right now.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. Let me ask you this question, then, because I know that Tom is dying to ask it. I'll ask it instead. Currently the ratio is about 50-50 - we've got 42 urban and 41 rural seats - but the population is about 60 percent urban and 40 percent rural. I guess the question is: do you see that as being fair? You know, if we're going to make a shift at some point, when do we finally shift away from the 50-50 urban/rural representation?

MR. SMIGEROWSKI: Well, I believe our county believes that you have to take into account the unique relationship of rural Alberta to their MLAs and the areas they have to cover. If you dilute that any more, their representation, it is difficult enough for them to meet with their constituency on a regular basis. If you dilute their representation in the provincial Legislature, that just dilutes the process even more and certainly is a detriment to what we would call equal representation. It's far easier for an urban MLA to meet with his constituents and knock on a door. It's far tougher for a rural MLA to knock on the same number of doors and talk and get the insight of his people.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any questions? No.

Thank you, Cary.

MR. SMIGEROWSKI: Thank you.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Ed, if you'd like to take the microphone.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members, for allowing us the opportunity to present our position with respect to the electoral boundaries legislation. I'm representing the county of Lamont in the official capacity as reeve. I'm also a resident of the Vegreville constituency and chairman of the Vegreville health unit.

We acknowledge that representation by population has been historically recognized as being fair in allowing equal representation in government. However, Mr. Chairman, I wish to question the fairness of that position and indicate areas where that representation is not always fair. In an urban constituency a voter may access his MLA by walking a few blocks to the constituency office. However, in some of the rural constituencies a person has to travel many miles to meet with his representative. Therefore, increasing the boundary of a rural constituency

to increase the number of voters within that constituency is not fair to the electors in that area as accessibility will be compromised.

We must be mindful of the fact that many of the rural constituencies incorporate many different municipalities, hospital and school districts. Redwater-Andrew constituency is one of these. For instance, presently there are six counties or portions thereof in the Redwater-Andrew constituency, namely Lamont, Two Hills, Smoky Lake, Thorhild, Sturgeon, and Strathcona; 10 towns and villages: Willingdon, Lamont, Bruderheim, Redwater, Thorhild, Waskatenau, Warspite, Radway, and Smoky Lake. There are six school boards: Two Hills, Lamont, Strathcona, Smoky Lake, Thorhild, Sturgeon; six hospital districts: Two Hills, Lamont, Redwater-Radway, Thorhild, Smoky Lake, and Vilna; and three health units: Vegreville, Sturgeon, and Northeastern. To hear every jurisdiction's concerns and needs requires a truly intense meeting schedule for an MLA. Furthermore, to accommodate all the needs of every jurisdiction on an equal basis is virtually impossible. We tend to share programs such as road improvements, school construction, and hospital use dollarwise on a constituency basis.

Rural Alberta will need stronger representation as we progress into the '90s. Rural development and agriculture are not on the priority list of an urban MLA. If we lose more rural divisions to the urban divisions because of representation by population, we definitely will not have the same voice in the Legislative Assembly. Issues such as urban sprawl advancing into number 1 soil, issues relating to pesticide and herbicide application on agricultural land, issues relating to fish and wildlife habitat retention or reinforcing the secondary road construction program: all require a voice in the Assembly with some understanding, experience, and knowledge of the issue, again best represented by a rural MLA.

Some of the rural divisions presently have an urban flavour to them and therefore are not as rural as we may think they are. The Vegreville constituency is one example. The town of Vegreville with 4,000 voters, the town of Tofield with 800 voters, as well as the surrounding acreage developments fall within the boundaries of the constituency, which presently has 12,167 voters. I'm sure the committee members know of other examples of similar situations in the province.

Mr. Chairman, we can only ask this committee to consider fairness in your recommendations to the Legislature and to be mindful of the fact that reducing the number of rural constituencies will have a negative impact on rural Alberta, especially at a time when the need for representation in the Alberta Legislature is greater than ever to sustain the quality of life we enjoy.

I thank you for your time and attention, and I'm certainly open to questions. Thank you.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ed. Questions? Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Ed, you're proposing we maintain the status quo, which is basically that four rural electors equals seven urban electors. Having heard the dissertation regarding the B.C. decision from Madam Justice McLachlin, how do you feel this would stand up if we had a court challenge, if we maintained the status quo?

MR. STELMACH: There are so many different aspects to consider. This isn't the answer to the question you've just posed as far as a judge may view it, but when you consider the whole

area of fairness, certainly 30,000 voters in one constituency, a good portion of those voters, may have something in common. We in rural Alberta also have common needs that may be shared in other rural jurisdictions. But you will never get that across in the Legislature, because you wouldn't have the representation. I think you can find many examples of that in the federal government system, and I just hope we don't get into that situation in Alberta.

I shouldn't start leaning on the political side, but every party speaks of rural Alberta, agriculture being their number one priority. They're all concerned about it, but when it comes push to pull at the end of the term and they're knocking on doors and looking for votes, it's easier to compromise the position of those who don't have as many people speaking on their behalf in the Legislature. And that's going to be a very difficult question if this position is challenged in the courts - to win it, I agree, but I think there's this whole umbrella of being fair. Necessarily numbers do not mean fair.

MR. CARDINAL: I have a question, Ed. Because of the court challenge in B.C. and what Mr. Ledgerwood mentioned, do I hear you say, then, that the courts should possibly not be involved in how our provinces are governed in the future?

MR. STELMACH: I think, Mr. Cardinal, perhaps it'll be a blend of different opinions of people in Alberta. I believe that, you know, the situation is such that everybody may not be quite satisfied with the particular position of either government or organizations that seem to want to challenge it in the courts. Given some of the unique situations in the courts lately, I don't know. I think we can make a decent argument that what we're proposing is fair and that necessarily what we agreed on historically a hundred years ago is not really what we should be following today. I believe most of the people will be willing to accept some amount of change.

I'd like to also say that I haven't totally read the decision - not only that, but as to who presented both sides to the judge and how she ruled on that. But I think we're a province unto ourselves. I think that was B.C. and, fine, we can certainly take her decision into consideration, but let's try and develop some sort of policy based on what you hear from the hearings and be mindful of that. I'm certain you'll be able to come up with a respectable decision.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Ed, I've got one question, if I may. A number of years ago a lot of politicians got together and signed the Charter of Rights. From the Charter of Rights there are certain equality provisions contained therein, and now the courts have ruled upon it. It's been offered to us that because the British Columbia decision wasn't challenged, that set precedents throughout Canada and that's why Saskatchewan has changed their boundaries, Manitoba as well, British Columbia of course, and that's why we're going through the process at the moment. If that is precedent setting and we find that the only way there is to be any kind of measurement is by the number of ears and eyes there are in a constituency and they have to be as equally distributed as possible, would it be your choice to maintain the same number of rural seats, with an increase in urban representation? Or would you rather have the same number of MLAs throughout the province, with them thereafter being divided equally, or as equally within the framework as set out by Madam Justice McLachlin?

MR. STELMACH: If you change the status quo, increase the number of urban seats as opposed to the number of rural seats, and given the same number of rural, in the end I don't think we'll have the same voice. That would be compromised.

You know, we keep talking about rights and privileges and freedoms, but there comes a certain point that we must think of these rights and freedoms with a certain amount of responsibility. You don't flaunt your particular right. The best way to describe it is that you keep it as an ace in the sleeve. You don't advertise it; you don't bare your chest. You don't look to attract attention, to say, "Well, I have the right." I think that historically we've come a long way in this country. Now I see more and more people, and I'm quite sure you've noticed that in your constituency, that are getting a little upset with people making demands based specifically on rights: "It's my right." Maybe we should earn part of that right, and I believe in rural Alberta we have. Rural Alberta is the one that put the province initially on the map. We all know what agriculture is going through today. We may need some consideration and some representation in the Legislature over the next few years to get things back on track. But I can assure you that if we solely base it on what is the present right of the individual, I think it'll be slanted and it may not necessarily be fair.

I hope I've answered that question so that you may understand it. I don't know. I have great difficulty, along with many other people, when we keep pushing this rights issue, because it's something that has to be earned. I think we've come that way, and I believe we should stay in the same vein.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Garth, just before we get on to your presentation, I want to introduce another member of the Legislature. I'm sure that Steve Zarusky doesn't need an awful lot of introduction. He's the MLA for Redwater-Andrew. Welcome, Steve. Good to have you up front.

Garth.

MR. LEASK: Sorry I didn't bring a bunch of copies.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: That's okay.

MR. LEASK: I'm here as a resident of Cold Lake. I'm basically representing a bunch of people that I've talked to within the last seven years, because we go through this process, I understand, every seven years. The background for my presentation is that we're not looking for any changes in the boundaries as such today, but we are looking for a change of name.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Not necessarily.

MR. LEASK: We are looking for it.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see.

MR. LEASK: We are asking for it. It's not boundaries that we want to talk about; it's a change of name that we want to talk about. I don't know whether you people are prepared to hear this.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: That would probably come under whenever boundaries are redrawn. What happened in the last commission was that following the redrawing of boundaries,

there was an invitation for input for name change as well.

MR. LEASK: So you people can hear this.

MR. PRITCHARD: We would refer it on to the boundaries commission.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: We would refer it on to the boundaries commission, yes. How long is the presentation?

MR. LEASK: Oh, it'll just take a couple of minutes.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Okay. Go for it.

MR. LEASK: I'm writing to you as a citizen of Cold Lake in reference to your Bill 22 authorized on August 15, 1989, which gives the select committee authorization to hold public hearings for changes in the electoral boundaries and constituency name change. That's the way I understood it, so that's why it's written this way. As a traveller traveling North America for my employer, I've found in the last number of years that when I talked to somebody about this area in northeastern Alberta, the only name that stands out is Cold Lake. There are a number of reasons for people around the world to be familiar with the name Cold Lake, as the name reflects upon the oil industry, the Canadian Forces Base, Cold Lake, and a number of Canadian Forces bases around the world which have received F-18s along with trained personnel.

I would also suggest that with the discussions taking place with Saskatchewan on a proposed interprovincial park, this would also reflect the name Cold Lake in the provincial park, which will include boating, skiing, and an 18-hole golf course with nine holes in each province, with the fish hatchery and the \$6 million marina in place. I feel that the more we can expose the name Cold Lake, the other communities will benefit, as Cold Lake is at the end of the road and anyone traveling here would go through the constituencies spending tourist dollars. And that's kind of the background of my point.

I therefore propose a change of name by striking the name Bonnyville and adding Cold Lake, which would read Cold Lake constituency, with no change to the boundaries.

On a number of occasions I have been in the company of our MLA, Ernie Isley, who has been introduced as the representative of Bonnyville constituency, and Ernie had to clarify to the people that Bonnyville was near Cold Lake. Therefore I'm suggesting that a name change would not be a burden to any of the communities but would assist our MLA.

Now, I'll take any questions.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mike, did you have any?

MR. CARDINAL: No, I'd better not. I was going to say: on what side are the nine gopher holes going?

MR. LEASK: But you know, there are a lot of people in the area who are serious about this, because also we do have the majority of the voters for this constituency in our area.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: We'll make sure that the presentation you made today is passed on to the commission. Okay?

MR. LEASK: By the way, Ernie knows I'm doing it.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks so much. We'll courtesy-copy Ernie.

MR. LEASK: Yeah? I'll drop it off at his office.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Bob, have we got the next three presenters?

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, we do.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your presentation. Thank you.

MR. PRITCHARD: The next presenters are Roger Gingras, followed by Mr. Cherry.

MR. GINGRAS: Oh, okay. Thank you.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Anytime you want to go ahead, Roger.

MR. GINGRAS: Thanks, Mr. Chairman and committee members. Again, not here on a boundary change. It's again a name change. I'm representing the town of Cold Lake as the deputy mayor.

The town of Cold Lake wishes the select committee to consider a name change for the Bonnyville constituency to become the Cold Lake constituency.

The name Cold Lake has a national and international notoriety, unlike the name Bonnyville. International recognition exists because of the presence of CFB Cold Lake, because of the presence of Canadian Forces Bases in Europe and the United States, and because of Canadian involvement in United Nations peacekeeping.

The name Cold Lake has also been spread internationally. The name Cold Lake has international recognition as the destination point of the cruise missile. Nationally Cold Lake is known as the largest training base in Canada and the home of CF-18 training. Nationally, as well, Cold Lake appears on Imperial Esso television ads as the home of the Cold Lake tar sands. Nationally, as well, Cold Lake appears on all maps as one of the largest lakes in Canada. A change of name to the Cold Lake constituency would accordingly bring instant recognition and promote tourism.

Recently overtures have been made by our MLA, Ernie Isley, and the Cold Lake town council to promote an interprovincial water park. Because the park would be located on Cold Lake, the name Cold Lake will again gain prominence. This prominence we feel is necessary in order to fulfill the tourism potential that exists in this area.

Signed by the town of Cold Lake.

Thank you very much.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Roger. Again, we'll make sure the recommendation is passed on to the committee.

Doug. It's the last presentation. You can stay right there, Doug, if you wish, and perhaps we can just hand the amplification microphone down to you. That's *Hansard*.

MR. CHERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the

committee. It is my pleasure today to appear before the committee to present my views on the current debate over what criteria should determine electoral boundaries in this province.

The main thrust of my presentation will outline the differences between representing a rural versus an urban riding and explain why this warrants limiting the size and population of rural constituencies.

It is my intent to prove that effective representation is as important as representation by population.

First, I would like to make some points about the federal electoral system and Senate reform which I feel are relevant to this discussion. We all know how limited the federal electoral system has been in representing the interests of Alberta and western provinces. Under a system of representation by population where most of Canada's population lives in Ontario and Quebec, the majority of the seats in the House of Commons come from those two provinces. More often than not this has led to a situation where what central Canada wants, central Canada usually gets. I'm sure we could sit here today and come up with countless examples of decisions made which benefit central Canada at the expense of the west and other provinces.

On paper the Fathers of Confederation created an upper Chamber to represent various regional interests. However, as we also know, in reality this appointed Senate has failed to effectively represent the western provinces. In response to this central Canadian bias, the government of Alberta has been working hard to see Senate reform. There is a clear need for balance between representation by population and regional representation at the federal level. That same argument can be made at the provincial level. In Alberta 62 percent of the eligible voters live in the urban regions and 38 percent live in the rural. If Alberta's electoral system is to be based solely on representation by population, then the possibility could exist for the majority to impose their wishes and views on the minority. For example, it would not be fair or just if the people of Calgary and Edmonton decided that a dam should not be built in southern Alberta or a pulp mill should not be built in northern Alberta without equal input from rural Albertans, who would be most affected by these projects. So I ask the committee: how can we justify adopting a system that does not fairly represent the regional characteristics of this province, a system that, if implemented, would reflect many of the same shortcomings we see in western Canada and we find with our federal system of representation? Since we have no upper Chamber at the provincial level, the electoral system in Alberta must reflect both territorial representation and representation by population.

It is my view that rural representation must be maintained at the same level. If we lessen rural representation, we ignore the historic reality of this province. Farmers built Alberta into the strong and prosperous province we enjoy today, and agriculture along with the energy industry have played and continue to play a very vital role in our economy. Furthermore, if rural representation is diminished by dramatically increasing the size and population of rural ridings, the service provided to rural constituents would suffer and there would no longer be effective representation.

I justify this by pointing out a number of important differences between representing a rural and an urban constituency. First of all, there is the geographic difference. As the MLA for the Lloydminster constituency, I have a much larger area to represent than an urban MLA. Even though 52 percent of the people in my constituency live in the city of Lloydminster, I still must serve the other 48 percent who live in the rural area, and

that takes time. If Lloydminster and other rural constituencies become too large and sparsely populated, there will be serious difficulties in representation. If I am spending more time on the road than servicing my constituents, then I don't think I'm providing effective representation. And if representation is not effective, then democracy is not being well served.

There are those who say that advances in technology and communication have decreased the amount of time spent on traveling. This may be true to a certain extent, but it is also true that people prefer to talk face to face, not fax to fax. If rural constituencies are allowed to grow too large, then personal contact can be virtually impossible, and that isn't what I call effective representation.

In addition to differences in geography and accessibility, there are differences in the number of councils and boards that a rural MLA must serve. In my constituency alone there are five town councils, two county councils, four recreation boards, and four hospital- and health-related boards that I must be responsive to. The larger the constituency, the more councils and boards there will be to serve, and less time will be available to spend with each. Again, effective representation will suffer if a constituency is too large.

Urban MLAs also have the advantage of providing a common front when there is an issue in a particular urban centre common to all MLAs representing the area. For rural MLAs there is less opportunity for a common front to form. Most often we can only provide representation as individuals because the issue is unique to our constituency. This aspect must also be considered when discussing effective representation.

There are a number of factors to be taken into account when establishing electoral boundaries other than strict population equality. Such factors as historical and regional claims for representation, sparsity or density of population, accessibility, special interests, and a balance of common community interests must all be considered if representation is going to be effective. When determining these guidelines for establishing electoral boundaries, we must strive to achieve equality in the quality of representation as much as equality in the quantity of representation. I feel strongly that through considering these factors, we will conclude that the current electoral boundaries offer all Albertans the fair and thorough provincial representation they all deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Doug, I'm wondering if you've thought of a formula or a standard that we should be looking at: an MLA representing X number of square kilometres or X number of municipal entities, school boards. In your case you're the 13th smallest electoral division; there are 28 that are larger than Lloydminster. Have you thought about a sort of norm that we should be shooting for?

MR. CHERRY: Well, when I look back over the Lloydminster constituency, it wasn't too many years ago that our constituency was larger. They had the boundaries commission that saw fit to have the geographic boundaries take care of the constituency. In my constituency it takes me, from one side to the other, two and a half hours to come up to the total constituency, and I believe the constituency I have the honour of serving is what I would call the average in the way in which rural Alberta is situated. The city of Lloydminster, which I cover half of because the other half, of course, is in Saskatchewan, is quite a transient city in that it fluctuates back and forth somewhat. I dare say

that by 1991 we will see our population probably rise by 3,000 to 4,000 people. So in that respect I feel that it is a good load, a full load for an MLA to carry out his duties.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you.

MR. CARDINAL: Just a closing comment from me. I guess, listening to all these presentations, that as a rural MLA, because my riding is similar to the areas of St. Paul and Lloydminster, it is often difficult for a rural MLA to represent an area effectively. I guess one thing we have to keep in mind is that effective representation in Alberta is that all Albertans have an opportunity to maintain the same standard of living if possible. If you come right down to representation, the fact is the standard of living we manage to maintain in the province. I would hope that we could come up with a system that will address that.

Thanks.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: Steve, do you have some closing comments that you want to make?

MR. ZARUSKY: Sure. Thank you, Tom.

Colleagues from the Legislature and ladies and gentlemen, it's indeed a pleasure for me to be here also. I didn't know whether I would make it or not because of meetings in Edmonton. We, our constituency association and myself, didn't prepare a formal presentation here because we'll be doing it in Edmonton, I believe, on February 26, but I just want to comment here. As you can see, Redwater-Andrew is well represented here with the county of Smoky Lake, the county of Lamont, the town of Lamont, the county of Two Hills, and also I see the village of Waskatenau here. So I think Redwater-Andrew is fairly concerned about the process of boundary changes or whatever will happen, and I'm sure the process that goes on and why this is taking place was explained here before.

I also, as you see, have almost the same concerns as my colleague Doug here or Mike from Athabasca-Lac La Biche. The Redwater-Andrew constituency consists of seven counties and MDs either in it or bordering, 10 towns and villages, and numerous school boards, hospital boards, and health units. You can see what is happening as far as representing all these people goes. I wouldn't verify it or say at this point, but I think Redwater-Andrew maybe has the most elected people in local governments, which exceed well over a hundred. As an MLA there represented in the Legislature, it's very important that I do meet with these people as often as possible, because they're the people who naturally help us along in the Legislature in what the needs are of rural Alberta.

I think this is where we strike hopefully not a difference in representing our people in the Legislature but a difference in the way we represent them. I think Doug hit it so well by saying that it's that one-on-one contact that is very important. In the Redwater-Andrew constituency I've got three constituency offices to make sure that people have a place to meet me when I'm there or I make sure a secretary is there to carry their concerns or comments or needs on to government – so you can see the difference there – plus offices in the Legislature and whatever other committees that we as elected people are on. It's not only a matter of being an MLA. Maybe some of it was missed here, but you've got to realize that we are on many other boards or committees, doing things for the province in general, so you can see how an MLA's time is spent. I'm sure that my counties and MDs and whoever else made presentations here today have a

job on what their needs are, and I'll probably be reading them in *Hansard* as time goes on.

So other than that, I hope our urban colleagues here get the message and see what the needs are, and that they're not actually at a meeting like this. I myself think maybe there's a need for more of these meetings in other areas and other constituencies, and I think this is something that should be seriously looked at, to have other people give their input on what is being done. So like I said, we'll be doing our formal presentation from our association and from myself in Edmonton, so I'll just leave it with you. Hopefully the right thing comes out of all this.

Thank you very much.

MR. ACTING VICE-CHAIRMAN: That more or less concludes the presentations. I just want to run through some of the items that we've heard about today and that we've heard, indeed, around the province.

It was mentioned that St. Paul is a major trading centre, that you've got a number of government facilities from both the provincial and federal levels, that you've got a diversity of interests, and that you've got new economic growth coming about through an increased travel industry.

You've told us that we should be mindful of the Alberta presentation to Ottawa with our proposal to incorporate the Triple E concept at the second level, and you want to make sure we don't forget that when we determine what recommendations go to the electoral commission that's eventually set up.

The suggestion was made that there be a guaranteed minimum number of rural seats, or that at least there be a wider variation than the variance of 25 percent suggested by Chief Justice Madam McLachlin – the recommendation here today was 35 percent – and, if necessary, to increase the number of urban seats without diminishing the number of rural seats. Also, we should keep in mind that we ought to recognize there is population growth happening in and around the province and we ought to govern the commission accordingly. In fact, I can advise you that the last commission that was struck, there were a number of representations made from planners. That was very much in the consideration that there would be population variance and increase, and they did try to adjust accordingly.

You've talked of two formulas, an urban formula and a rural formula; that you have limited access to government services in rural Alberta. We've had suggestions that if there is any change, the change or the increase be homogeneous with the current economic climate of the constituency, that being mainly agrarian and agricultural. We've talked about the problems there are with travel not only from Edmonton but in and around the constituency.

Again we've heard argument that representation by population should not be the sole criteria and that the status quo of 41 rural seats to 42 urban seats remain the same. There have been other arguments that rural representation needs to be kept at the current level that it is, that indeed it perhaps ought to be increased as well. And we had, for the first time, proposed name changes of constituencies.

You must understand, and I think I can speak on behalf of all the committee, that what we want to do is make sure the recommendations we take back to the Legislature, which will eventually lead to the striking of a commission which will eventually, in turn, lead to the electoral boundaries being redrawn – that those recommendations, those electoral boundaries, have to be able to stand up to any potential challenge

any individual in Alberta may take to the courts. That's a concern we have as a committee; that's the reason why we're here. The representations that you've given to us today quite frankly have not made our job any easier, but then we didn't believe this would be an easy task when it was assigned to us.

If you have, before the committee finishes its final hearings on, I believe, March 5, any written formal presentation you would like to send to us, please make sure you have the address

from Robin, and we will receive those representations, then, before we go into our deliberations.

I want to thank you for coming out and showing your interest; it's much appreciated. And if you had a wonderful time this afternoon, we will be in Viking tonight. Thank you very much for coming.

[The committee adjourned at 3:34 p.m.]