

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[10:03 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm pleased to welcome you to this hearing of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. We're still expecting one committee member, but I'm going to proceed, in light of the time.

The process we've been following in other meetings is to invite a couple of presenters forward. We'll deal with them one at a time. Once the brief has been given, members of the committee will be given an opportunity to ask questions or make comments, and we then give an opportunity to those in the room to add to or make their comments. Then we'll proceed to the second presenter and so on.

I'd like to begin by introducing the committee members who are here. Starting on my left, first of all, is Tom Sigurdson. Tom is a New Democratic member of the Assembly. He represents the constituency of Edmonton-Belmont. On my immediate right, Mike Cardinal. Mike is a Conservative member of the Assembly and represents the constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche. Next to Mike is Pam Barrett. Pam is the House leader for the New Democrats in the Assembly, and Pam represents the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands. My name is Bob Bogle, and I represent the constituency of Taber-Warner. I'm a Conservative member of the Assembly. As I mentioned, we are expecting one more committee member to come, but in light of time, I'm going to suggest that we proceed.

In a moment Frank will give us an overview - excuse me; Tom will give us an overview of the slides. We've been rotating in the hearings we've had around the province. Different members have presented different parts of the presentation, and in a way you have to pinch yourself now: it's Monday; I'm in Edmonton; we're not in Waskatenau or Barrhead today. But it is a process that is extremely important.

You know why the committee has been struck. If these were normal times, Alberta would have followed a practice, according to our own legislation, of appointing an Electoral Boundaries Commission, a commission which has traditionally been chaired by a judge and has had on it the Chief Electoral Officer. In the past it has had government and opposition MLAs and one or more citizen at large. The boundaries commission's task in the past has been to take the direction it's been given in legislation, go out, and draw the lines to create new boundaries. In the last redistribution, which occurred in 1983-84, the commission was given the direction that there would be 42 urban divisions and 41 rural. They then drew the lines to create the actual boundaries.

I'll just pause for a moment to introduce the vice-chairman of the committee, Stockwell Day. Stock is the Conservative Member for Red Deer-North.

However, due to a court case in British Columbia in which - Professor Dixon took the B.C. government to court citing sections in the Charter of Rights as his basis that the variance between the smallest populated riding and the most heavily populated riding was too great, and therefore the standards in British Columbia did not conform with the Charter. The case was heard by Chief Justice McLachlin, who was Chief Justice of the B.C. court at that time. She has since been elevated to the Supreme Court of Canada. In Justice McLachlin's ruling the decision was rendered that there should be no more than a plus or minus 25 percent variance from a provincial average population. When Tom leads us through the slides today, Tom will show you what implication that would have on the Alberta scene. He'll also show you, as a result of one of the earlier

hearings - and this is living proof of the value of having hearings like this. We did receive a recommendation at one of the earlier hearings that we should consider going to a total population base rather than an elector base; that if you used a total population base, you'd find that your numbers would not only be larger but there would be some advantage to rural constituencies where families tend to be a bit larger than in urban ridings. So we'll show you the results of that as well.

I might also mention that subsequent to Professor Dixon taking the B.C. government to court in British Columbia and winning on the question of size, he went back to the courts and argued that indeed the existing boundaries were ultra vires and the government should move immediately. Justice Meredith ruled on that case and said no, that is not so. While he did not disagree with the findings of McLachlin, he indicated that it was not up to the courts to direct the government to move in a particular time frame. That decision was not appealed and stands at this time.

So the three parties represented in the Alberta Legislature got together through their House leaders and decided that prior to appointing a commission in Alberta, keeping in mind the events which had taken place in British Columbia, we should strike an all-party committee and the committee should look at the historical background in Alberta, should look at the implications of the Charter, should look at a variety of other factors, and should hold public hearings to obtain input from Albertans on our own situation. We are nearing the end of that process now. We do have hearings set next week, both Monday and Tuesday, in four communities. I think we're in Hanna, Wainwright, Barrhead, and Waskatenau. That concludes the public hearing process, at least as far as I am aware. We've extended our hearing process because of increased demand. This is an add-on hearing, for instance, for the city of Edmonton. We will have the other meetings that I've made reference to, and that's based on the need as expressed by people or organizations who have written in and said, "Would you please give us an opportunity to be heard?" For that reason, we've added to the hearing process.

It is our objective as a committee to make a report. I'd like to think that we will have a unanimous report; we may not. But we will indeed as a committee be making recommendations to the Assembly so that in the legislation which creates the Electoral Boundaries Commission, whatever changes we believe should become part of the guidelines or the parameters for the commission can be considered by the Assembly. The Assembly must then decide whether to adopt them as presented or amend them so that, indeed, a commission can be struck.

I'm going to pause at that point and ask Tom to lead us through the slides. We'll then again pause, and if there are any questions for clarification, we'll deal with them and then go on to our presenters.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The first slide is a list of all the constituencies in alphabetical order. It really doesn't give you any idea of the range of population we have throughout this province in each constituency. However, I would draw to your attention that the Cardston constituency is a bit of an anomaly in that the Blood Indian Band chose not to participate in the enumeration in the last election, so their numbers are down by approximately 1,800. Now, even that 1,800 voter population drop is in question, because that's the last time they participated in an enumeration. That's the number we have. When we were in Cardston, we heard that the population of the band has gone up, almost doubled that, I believe. So the

Cardston figure may be out of whack by quite some bit.

Again, looking at the constituencies in the province, this time we've got them listed in order of their voter population. You can see that at the high end we have Edmonton-Whitemud at 31,500 and at the low end Cardston at 8,100. If you want to take the second smallest constituency in terms of voter population, you move to Cypress-Redcliff at 8,900.

When you add all the names from all the constituencies together, you end up with well over a million and a half names. If you divide that by the 83 electoral districts, you end up with an average of 18,685. Using the McLachlin decision, if you have a variance of plus or minus 25 percent, you can add a tolerance at the high end of 23,356 or at the low end of 14,014.

If you go back to the slide that's got those constituencies listed by voter population, you'll see that we have a number of constituencies, those constituencies that are highlighted, falling outside the suggested tolerance. Those constituencies highlighted in green are well above the average plus 25 percent; they are all urban. These constituencies highlighted in red are below the 25 percent suggested tolerance, and they are all rural.

Putting that on the map of the province, you'll see that we've got a good portion of our land that's covered in pink. Those are the constituencies throughout Alberta that are below the 25 percent level. There are two constituencies in there coloured in green; they are Medicine Hat and St. Albert. You can just barely make them out though.

The city of Calgary has a number of constituencies on the outer limits of the city that are still growing, and those constituencies are well above the average plus 25 percent. The same thing with the city of Edmonton: again the growth is going along the boundaries of the city, and these constituencies have populations above the 25 percent variance.

Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West fall well within the mid-range on the average and don't present any problem to this committee or to Justice McLachlin, I suppose, were she to look at these two constituencies. So that is quite all right. However, Medicine Hat is the constituency with the fourth highest voter population in the province, well above the 25 percent tolerance.

In the last redistribution the city of Red Deer had one constituency; this goes back to 1983. So for the '82 election the city of Red Deer had one constituency. The legislation that came out in the 1983 spring session said that Red Deer was entitled, given its voter population, to two constituencies. The brown boundary shows the city limits of Red Deer. There wasn't sufficient voter population inside the city limits to warrant, really, two constituencies, so the commission went out into the county of Red Deer and brought in sufficient numbers of voters to the urban constituencies and created the two constituencies. So the dark outer line is the outline of the constituency; the brown interior line is the city boundary.

The city of St. Albert is still growing in terms of its voter population and its overall population, and it presents a bit of a problem.

This map shows those constituencies that have voter population 35 percent below the average voter population, and this next map shows those constituencies in our province that have voter population 50 percent below the average. All of these constituencies have less than 10,000 voters.

These dots on the map indicate those areas where we have gone or where we are going to in the next short while to have public hearings on electoral boundary changes. We have an updated slide - it's the first time we've seen this - of the number of places we've gone to or will be going to. We've

added Edmonton today and then all the other dates: March 5 and 6, Calgary, Hanna, Wainwright; and on the 6th Barrhead and Waskatenau.

Using the map showing those constituencies that have 35 percent off the average, you can see that we are trying to get into those areas to have public submissions and listen to the concerns of the folk that may be most affected by any changes to the electoral map of the province.

As the chairman indicated, we wanted to take a look at what including all Albertans would do to the electoral map. Just using voter population, we have approximately a million and a half Albertans that are eligible to vote, but we have 2,365,000 Albertans now. There are a lot of people that are excluded, obviously: people that are under the age of 18, students for the most part, whom we represent in the Legislature when we go through educational budgets, yet they're not included in any of the global population figures when we divide constituencies; immigrants; the Indians, for example, at the Blood Reserve, who if they've got a problem still go to their MLA; religious groups.

So when you take the total population and divide it by the 83 constituencies, you have an average of 28,500. Using the formula that came out of the British Columbia court case, you have a top end variance of 35,600 or a low end of 21,300. What that does to the map is quite significant: it takes a number of constituencies out of the high end and the low end. But if you take a look at the red highlighted area, if you recall, Cardston was at the very bottom. When you take total population, Cardston moves up to the middle of the low end. It's still well below the 25 percent average, but it has moved up quite substantially. We have a few changes on the map as well. Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray are now above the 25 percent tolerance, and I believe we've lost two constituencies that were formerly highlighted in the pink. It does change slightly the map of Calgary and Edmonton. Some of the constituencies have a higher electoral population which would have created some problem, but now with voter population it's shifted the weight a little bit. Still, they're all well above the 25 percent variance, and all again on the outside of the city or at the edge of the city. The same thing with the city of Edmonton.

Here's where you really see significant changes. Under the enumeration we had 16 constituencies that were 35 percent below the 25 percent level when we used only electoral lists. Using total population, that falls from 16 to 12 constituencies. Then looking at the map of those constituencies that have less than 50 percent, we've fallen from five, when we just use the voters list, to just the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest.

The committee has traveled to Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia to look at the changes they've done to their electoral boundaries. As you can see by the dates, we've traveled throughout the province. As of Valentine's Day we've had 546 people attending these public hearings and we've had 209 submissions, not including the 72 we've received by mail.

If there are any questions, now may be the time.

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

Bob, let's proceed with the first presenters.

MR. PRITCHARD: I'd just like to ask the presenters to come to this table, please. First, Anita Ratchinsky, mayor of St. Albert, and Nick Taylor, MLA for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anytime you're ready.

MRS. RATCHINSKY: Mr. Chairman, other members of the panel, and ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Sigurdson in his outline said St. Albert was a bit of a problem. The two of us are here today to present views of our council. I have Alderman Bracko with me, and I'm the mayor of the city of St. Albert.

Population update. I think your chart showed 36,000. We're just over 40,000 now and growing – a little bit of a population explosion in St. Albert.

We won't be too long with our presentation. We're here representing the views of our council. We passed some resolutions in council that demonstrate how we feel we would like to see our riding divided if, in fact, that's going to happen, and we understand that it will, according to your outline. Our resolutions read as follows:

That the council of the city of St. Albert strongly support the inclusion of the St. Albert constituency in the review of electoral boundaries by the special select committee.

That, in fact, is happening, and we support that.

That, regardless of the method or formulae utilized by the select special committee to consider the redistribution of electoral boundaries, the council of the city of St. Albert express a strong preference for the creation of two urban ridings from the current St. Albert electoral division.

Being an urban riding now, our preference is to continue to have urban representation. If, in fact, we were going outside the city of St. Albert, we would like to have it looked at that the country estates surrounding our city be attached, if in fact there had to be some consideration for going outside the city. The intent of that is self-explanatory. They have urban concerns, and we felt they would fit with an urban riding.

Last but not least – there are other things, but this is the third resolution that we passed:

That the council of the city of St. Albert recommend to the select special committee that a 20 percent factor be applied to the average number of voters per electoral division rather than the 25 percent.

That being the British Columbia percentage, we felt that in our province the 20 percent factor would be fairer. I don't know how that works out in percentage numbers; I just leave that with you as one of our recommendations.

Alderman Bracko would expand a little bit on some of our thoughts and deal with it further.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mayor Ratchinsky.

St. Albert is the fastest growing city in Alberta at this time. I know you're aware of this. We have tremendous growth at this time. Last year we had over 500 new housing starts; this year we anticipate another 800. We're looking at an increase for the next two or three years. At the last election we had 24,714 voters in St. Albert. Since that time our population has increased from 36,000 to over 40,000, so that adds another 2,500 voters to the list. This would bring us up close to 28,000 voters in St. Albert at this time.

In addition, there are 3,000 high school students who will be eligible to vote in the next election. Granted, not all will stay in St. Albert, but a good many do. So this would bring us over 31,000. I talked to some of the major land developers, and they have on their books close to 2,500 to 3,000 new housing starts in the next three to four years. This again will increase our population and number of voters to perhaps well over 35,000. We feel it's important that we address the problem at this time so we can get the proper number formula for the number of voters we have in St. Albert.

We're asking for two urban ridings. We feel that this would be in the best interests of St. Albert to meet the urban demands.

With that we see that St. Albert could be divided any way that is necessary. It could be divided similarly to Lethbridge or, if need be – as Mayor Ratchinsky has said – we could add the rural estates to the constituencies. So we request and ask the commission at this time to carefully consider St. Albert and our request for two urban ridings.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your presentation. Any questions or comments by committee members? Yes, Stock.

MR. DAY: Your Worship, I'm interested in the rationale from 25 to 20 percent. Throughout the hearings we've had different representations on making the percentage greater or smaller, and I'm just wondering why the suggestion from 25 to 20.

MRS. RATCHINSKY: We just felt that it would be fairer, Mr. Day, and that's looking at the whole province, just not looking at St. Albert in seclusion. Some of the inherent problems around the province are distance and dealing with numbers of different municipal jurisdictions in those areas. In an urban riding it's a little bit easier with that. But the 20 percent variance – and I apologize for not having worked through the numbers and how it would affect us – we just felt that it would be a fairer distribution and maybe bring things a little bit closer together as ridings, as constituencies. I'm sorry I didn't break it down any further.

MR. DAY: And the country estates you refer to, are those people presently in rural ridings? They're not in St. Albert?

MRS. RATCHINSKY: They are presently in the county of Sturgeon, Westlock-Sturgeon, and we'll have some comments from Mr. Taylor on that.

MR. DAY: So they've been clamouring for a change, have they?

MRS. RATCHINSKY: Mr. Taylor can comment on that one as well. I wouldn't touch that one.

MR. TAYLOR: Outright theft.

MRS. RATCHINSKY: In any case, concerning that we just felt that urban concerns are easier met by an urban representative. And albeit selfish on the part of urbanites, it's somewhat easier, even on the rural people, if they can have their own type of representation. I think that's a known fact. So that's the reason we felt that those country estates – their concerns are urban in nature, and we felt they would fit well with an urban constituency.

MR. DAY: Okay. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your Worship, has council considered increasing the size of the Alberta Legislature? There has been some thought that perhaps the Alberta Legislature ought to increase in size. Or would you maintain it at the current 83, and just redraw boundaries?

MRS. RATCHINSKY: As a council we didn't bring forth any

position, but my position would be that it shouldn't be increased substantially. I'd like to see the 83, and looking at some of the numbers within the city of Edmonton even, redistribution of boundaries would fit with that scenario.

I guess I would be always cognizant of the fact that with increased representation there are increased costs to the taxpayer, and at this time, in any case, just at the present stage of our economy, I don't think that would be a wise move on anybody's part. I think responsible decision-making and cost-effectiveness have got to be the name of the game at this time in our lives.

MR. SIGURDSON: Good. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I just have two quick questions: the estimated population of your rural estates your council's looking at; and also what I hear you recommending, I believe, would be an urban/rural type of riding. Is that . . .

MRS. RATCHINSKY: Well, I'll answer your second one and then I'll . . .

MR. BRACKO: There'd be approximately 1,700 people from the rural estates.

MRS. RATCHINSKY: They would be from an urban district, but their concerns would be of an urban nature. I guess that was my intent.

MR. BRACKO: The focal point would be St. Albert and not Morinville or some other small town.

MR. CARDINAL: So the population would increase from just over 40,000 to about 42,000 possibly.

MR. BRACKO: These are voters, not population. These are the voters.

MR. CARDINAL: Oh, the voting population. Yeah.

MRS. RATCHINSKY: Population would be more. We have a fair number of country estates out around the Sturgeon valley golf course and going the other way, out towards Highway 16X.

MR. CARDINAL: So you have 24,714. Now, you'd add 1,700 to that.

MRS. RATCHINSKY: That 24,000 is low.

MR. BRACKO: Probably close to 27,000 at this time. If you add the 1,700, it would be over.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Any other questions or comments from those present?

MR. BRACKO: May I just close with . . . If we divide the constituency, we'd like the urban divisions to be equal if we add some rural to it, and we prefer not to be part of Edmonton. No offence to Edmonton.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think St. Albert's views are quite well known.

MRS. RATCHINSKY: I think our MLA will uphold our views as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Okay. Thanks very much.
Nick.

MR. TAYLOR: I think you have copies of my . . . Maybe I can circulate it. I'll give them to the press, but maybe they can pick them up later.

First of all, I want to make it clear that I'm speaking on behalf of myself, not for a party or a group or a religion or anything else. As you know, I have been very interested in systems of government for some years and I've worked a great deal abroad, so I've picked up a lot of ideas.

One of the things I want to get across first of all is that I think you have a mindset on the McLachlin decision that isn't fair, that isn't proper. If you read that from cover to cover – and I know I make the rather sarcastic remark that I'm not a lawyer, but logic and law have never been the same as far as I'm concerned, or often not the same – not once in the whole decision does she mention the bicameral system, and that's what we have to remember we don't have here. It's a unicameral system. She talks about representation per population and refers to the House of Representatives and the House of Commons, but not once does she mention the Senate of the United States, where New York is equalized with Nevada, some twentieth to twenty-fifth the size. So the whole idea when we set up much of Canada was a bicameral system, one House offsetting the other. When we came to Alberta, we did away with a unicameral system. The idea: our forefathers wanted to save money. I guess they didn't want to have a bunch of Senators, and maybe you couldn't blame them at that time because everybody thought of appointed Senators.

But what we do have and I want to get back to is that the basis, to my way of thinking, of a rural population should be absolutely equal to the city population. In my paper I go into the fact that this is how the city-state, the city-state way back. Madam Justice McLachlin's decision could have been rendered at the time of Athens when she talks about one person . . . The debates of Socrates through Plato to Aristotle all mention one person, one vote. But as time developed, in order to bring the rural areas into the country – countries developed from the city-state – we had to equalize voting strength between the rural and the city-state. Consequently, you get your bicameral systems that developed all over Europe and those areas of Asia that had democracies.

We're throwing out here, in this quest of lumping one person, one vote, the equalization of regions, and I think that was left to our friend Premier Wells of Newfoundland, who recently brought out in the last constitutional conference that a country is a lot more than equalization of individuals; it is equalization of regions. Our province, of all, has done so much complaining about the dictatorship of the majority in central Canada, with one person, one vote. I think we would be really remiss if we jumped into that same basket in dividing up the seats in Alberta. I think you have to balance the rural against the urban, and my way, I think, is a very easy way of doing it. Because you can't divide 83 MLAs in half, although some people might think there are some of those who would equal that half, I would raise the House to 84 and make it 42 each: 42 seats within the incor-

porated cities – total them all up in Alberta – and 42 in unincorporated cities. Surprisingly enough, that makes very, very little difference to the map, but what it would do is cement in place for posterity the fact that we are indeed a unicameral system that practises the bicameral idea of the rural balanced against the urban.

If you look at the 42 seats – I did some playing with the map; it's a little difficult – the cities of Grande Prairie and McMurray would end up with their own MLAs, but outside of that there would be very little change. I think Calgary would stay the same and Edmonton would stay the same. I know that's got to hurt their feelings, because their whole idea of success is to keep growing until they meet at Red Deer and take that over. The point is they'd stay the same. But the point is that when you've split 42 each, the population average for each area would be different. The population average for the cities would, of course, be much higher than the population average for the rural at 42 but keep that 25 percent variation within rural and urban.

I'll move along fairly fast because you may have some questions. Lastly, because I feel you have the right to do it here, is the whole question of electoral boundaries for the Senate, because we've now taken on electing our Senators. You are the electoral boundaries commission. I feel you have the duty and then probably the right to set electoral boundaries. I think that presently we have six boundaries, and you should give serious thought to dividing Alberta up into six regional areas, there again emphasizing the idea of regional representation. Alberta splits itself into six very easily: northeast, northwest, central, south, Calgary, and Edmonton. So I would like to suggest you take on a little extra authority and set electoral boundaries, because if you continue the present system of electing Senators at large, that means you've got to be within the sound of a Flames or an Oilers yell; otherwise, you haven't much chance of winning the Senate election because that's where over half the vote would be.

In summary, then, I think what I would say is that for a province that has made much of the dictatorship of the majority by the concentration of population in the Montreal-Toronto-Ottawa triangle and the injustices it has inflicted on the extremities of Canada to now turn around in its own backyard and recommend that same unjust system for representation in Alberta, leaving our provincial extremities to the tender mercies of all those living within shouting distance of where the Flames or Oilers play their games, would be a lousy trick indeed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Nick.
Questions?

MR. SIGURDSON: Nick, what Senatorial seat are you looking at?

MR. TAYLOR: I want one just to make Westlock-Sturgeon and then review all the rest.

MR. SIGURDSON: I thought that might be the case.

MR. TAYLOR: Her Worship said that they should have urban concerns, but they have lots of power rurally, so you're going to have a little trouble prying them out of the rural area.

MR. SIGURDSON: I do have a couple of questions that are a little more serious, I think. I suppose we've got a bit of a crisis. We've got rural depopulation happening in the province. You

argue that we ought to enshrine a 42-42 scenario, equal representation for all time.

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. I'd enshrine that, but don't forget you're enshrining cities too. So who knows what'll happen over the next 50 years. I'm just saying that on a unicameral system you have to enshrine the rural versus urban; otherwise you're going to run into trouble.

MR. SIGURDSON: If rural population continues to decline, at what point would you then change the ratio of urban/rural seats?

MR. TAYLOR: Well, I can't imagine it declining beyond the population of the Arctic, for instance. We're talking about bringing in provinces there, we're talking about giving those provinces equal say in running Canada, so I can't imagine why northeast Alberta or eastern Alberta, who might decline to a population equal to the north part of the Territories, which I doubt they will, wouldn't have just as much rights as the Territories in running Canada and running Alberta. So I don't think the population count matters.

MR. SIGURDSON: But that's a separate jurisdiction. We're talking about within one jurisdiction, Alberta.

MR. TAYLOR: But I'm talking about equality of power and feeling that you're a sense of the country.

MR. SIGURDSON: So am I. I'm talking about equality of power, too, and I'm wondering if at any point in a rural depopulation or an urban increase of population you would change the representation inside the Legislature.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, don't forget I'd be taking all of Alberta and dividing by 42. I'll tell you this. If all rural Alberta disappears, Calgary and Edmonton will soon afterwards. If you can envision an economy that has nobody living out there in those 42 constituencies, everybody living in Calgary and Edmonton, you've got a sick province anyhow.

MR. SIGURDSON: I can appreciate the argument, but again it comes back to the question: is there a point where you would change the ratio?

MR. TAYLOR: I don't think there's a point, in common sense anyhow, no.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it really comes back, Tom, to the question on the Triple E Senate. Our position as a province is that we should have a Triple E Senate in Canada whether you live in Prince Edward Island, with your population, or Ontario.

MR. TAYLOR: He doesn't, of course, agree with a Senate. This is why. His idea is a million people singing *Solidarity Forever* as they march across Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The fellows are getting ready for March 8. Can you see that?
Stockwell.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just the mention of rural depopulation – recently international futurists with proven records were talking about a trend away from the cities. Not to at all suggest to any Edmontonians here that there would be anything unattractive about wanting to move to Edmonton, that is seen to be a trend. Have you seen that? I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if I could have liberty to not just ask this to Mr. Taylor but reflect back to Her Worship. Are you seeing that yet in your areas, an actual increase in your constituency, Mr. Taylor, and a spreading out away from . . . Even though St. Albert may not be classified as a large city in terms of 500,000 people, do you see this happening yet, or do you think that is yet in store for Alberta?

MRS. RATCHINSKY: The rural people moving closer to an urban centre?

MR. DAY: Yes, but the urban centre itself not actually increasing but in fact people with increased and improved infrastructure – highways, et cetera – moving back out into the rural areas.

MRS. RATCHINSKY: Not substantially.

MR. TAYLOR: There's been an increase in my area. At first my ego said it was because that was the first one that had gone Liberal in the province, but after that I figured it was because of the able governments we have in Morinville and Westlock and in the MDs. But we have had an increase in population in ours. As you know, I operate and do quite a little work overseas, and I think the new technology, the new computer-type work, and also the pressure on the environment will be pushing people in the next century back rurally rather than into cities, because it's a lot easier to let God and nature and the trees and fresh air take care of the pollution that's drowning everybody together like rats. I think as economies develop also without the necessity of huge labour forces – you'll have small labour forces, technology – your small towns will pick up a lot more population.

MR. DAY: Thanks. I just wanted your observations on that from your own experience.

Just one more question, Mr. Chairman. You talk about the bicameral system. Would you suggest a provincial bicameral system, limited, let's say, to six Senators and a strict cap on expenses, things like that?

MR. TAYLOR: You mean only about 25 MLAs and maybe 10 Senators or something? It has its attractiveness, but I thought if I could get you this far, that would be a quantum leap, more than I've done in the past. I didn't want to go that far.

MR. DAY: You haven't given any active consideration to this?

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, yes. A bicameral system was put in – wasn't it? – in Quebec, and I think in the early stages of B.C. it was mentioned, and in Ontario. But those areas where the second House was elected, they soon fell into disuse and were abolished. Maybe they should have been, because they were appointed. But in the Legislature we can't keep taking the coward's way out, as we have been, by paying lip service to increased representation for the cities. As you know, the House is pretty full now. Last time there was not enough space to put

in ramps for one of our MLAs in a wheelchair.

MR. DAY: Well, that was the point of my question, in terms of if you've given active consideration on a provincial bicameral . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. No, I've thought about it. It's a thought, but I don't think we're going to get people that far that quickly.

MR. DAY: Okay. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CARDINAL: I just have a quick comment, I guess in a sense a question, Nick. As a rural MLA adjacent to your riding, your presentation makes a lot of sense as far as representation, and I think we need to look at that very seriously.

MR. TAYLOR: Thanks. I love you too.

MR. CARDINAL: I think you have a point you've brought forward here, and the point is that there are now regional disparities that exist between urban centres and rural Alberta. As Albertans, I think we need to design a system like you're suggesting, that we make sure we look after Albertans in as fair a manner as possible in the future. If it's necessary to change it every four years to make sure that continues happening, then we should make sure we do that. So that was it, basically.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?
Thanks very much, Nick.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much for giving me time. I'm sorry taking time from some of the others, because I can always argue with you fellows. I felt a little bit embarrassed to take time from the rest. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Speak into the mike. We may want to play that back in about a month's time.

MR. PRITCHARD: We have three people giving the next presentation. Donna Fraser, Jack Kane, and Jack Clements come up, please.

MS FRASER: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. We represent the Edmonton-Whitemud PC Association. My name is Donna Fraser, and I'm joined by Jack and Jack, members of our committee. We're pleased to have this opportunity to make a presentation to you today on behalf of our board of directors. Our submission of about 15 minutes will include some comments related to the considerations outlined on page 2 of your package's letter, although not in the same order, and some recommendations. I will leave a copy of our presentation with you.

Number (a): your items (b) and (d) relating to the Charter, legal decisions, et cetera. We would make the following comments about the B.C. Supreme Court decision rendered by Madam Justice McLachlin, now of the Supreme Court of Canada, in her review of the current B.C. electoral boundaries, and of the report of the Fisher commission, about some of which comments have already been made this morning.

One, to our knowledge the decision has not been appealed and while a guideline, is not binding on Alberta.

Two, the results of the efforts of a boundary commission are

potentially subject to review under the Charter of Rights. However, as noted by Justice McLachlin in determining the rights guaranteed by the Charter, it "calls for a generous interpretation" as opposed to what may be called a strict, narrow, or formula-based interpretation. "The right to vote and participate in the democratic election of one's government is one of the most fundamental of the Charter rights."

Three, the rights under the Charter "must be defined against the wider historical and philosophic tradition of Canadian society." It is noted that our history and traditions are different from those of the United States.

Four, the concept of representation by population is fundamental, and part of that is the notion of equality of voting power. But our tradition "accommodates significant deviation from the ideals of equal representation." McLachlin discusses these issues at some length and concludes that the Charter does not require "absolute – or as near as practicable to absolute – equality of numbers of electors within electoral districts."

Five, the fundamental function of an MLA is to represent their constituency in two roles, legislative and so-called ombudsman. "It is not consistent with good government that one member be grossly overburdened with constituents, as compared with another member."

Six, the Fisher commission recommended a deviation of plus or minus 25 percent. This compares to a plus or minus 25 percent standard for federal ridings, with some exceptions: Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, and Alberta, which has a plus 25 percent in urban seats only. It's 15 percent in Saskatchewan, with at least one exception, and to our knowledge B.C. had no standard of deviation.

Madam Justice McLachlin concludes that the recommendation of the Fisher commission "appears reasonable," although it is not clear whether a higher or lower deviation would also be acceptable. She also states, as you have stated this morning, that it is not the role of the courts to decide the individual electoral boundaries; it is the responsibility of the Legislature. The court will examine the results if called upon to do so.

Seven, Justice McLachlin concludes that while population must be a dominant factor, it is not the only factor and a deviation range is appropriate. And here I think is the crux of the whole decision:

Only those deviations should be admitted which can be justified on the ground that they contribute to better government of the populace as a whole, giving due weight to regional issues within the populace and geographic factors within the territory governed. Geographic considerations affecting the servicing of a riding and regional interests meriting representation may fall in this category and hence be justifiable.

She also concludes that including geographic and regional concerns in determining electoral boundaries to achieve good government is valid and meets the "pressing and substantial" test laid down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Departure from the ideal of absolute equality may not constitute breach of s.3 of the Charter so long as the departure can be objectively justified as contributing to better government. The phrases "good" or "better" government, "geographic" and "regional" interests appear several times in her judgment.

Number (b): your items (e) and (f) relating to geographical, demographic factors and the role of the MLA. Our association supports the recognition of differences between the urban and rural parts of our province. Our history and traditions have supported the concept of fairness in representation for all Albertans. This has meant, especially in the rural areas, that in addition to population, attention has been given to geographical

factors, distances, and regional issues like natural communities and neighbourhoods, logical trading areas, consistency with municipal and other local government boundaries, socioeconomical groupings, and transportation corridors in determining electoral boundaries. This has resulted in a 7-4 urban/rural vote ratio, one we consider not unreasonable. We want this tradition and practice to continue.

Attention needs to be paid to neighbourhoods, especially in the urban seats. The division of the Riverbend community, with most of it in Edmonton-Whitemud and a small part with no geographical connection in Edmonton-Parkallen was unfortunate.

We also strongly support the use of total population figures rather than voter population figures as the population base. We feel it is important to include all residents of the constituency – and again, some of these comments were made this morning – whether voters or not, such as non-Canadians, children, and cohesive population groups like Indian bands or Hutterite colonies who are possibly not enumerated. In addition, we know the difficulty of ensuring a total and complete enumeration. All residents are eligible to seek information or assistance from or to otherwise communicate with their MLA; therefore, population rather than voter population should be the basis for determining boundaries.

While it is true that technological advances have improved the communication process, a letter in the mail, a column in the newspaper, a speech on TV, or a message on the fax, however helpful, are all one-way, noninteractive forms of communication. None of these takes the place of the need for direct physical accessibility to the MLA. The size and population of a constituency need to be manageable to ensure that all constituents are able to be sufficiently and properly represented. We only vote for them once every few years; they need to be able to work effectively for us in between.

Number (c): your items (a) and (c) relating to the Act and the commission. The work of the commission will be very important. Edmonton-Whitemud supports the underlying principles of fairness and public input. We note that the last commission in 1984 reported in mid-July and held hearings in late August. That may not have been a convenient time of year nor sufficient lead time for individuals and groups to properly respond. Also, the six-month provision in the Act may not be sufficient in some cases. Depending on the terms of reference under which the boundaries commission will operate, we suggest that consideration be given to public hearings before an interim report, and we support the provision for mandatory public hearings after the interim report.

Recommendations: there are four. One, the Edmonton-Whitemud PC Association recommends that where the population is used as a factor, it should be census figures, not voters lists.

Two, the principle of fairness in representing all Albertans is important. The considerations of geography and regional interests as well as population are legitimate factors in determining reasonable electoral boundaries to achieve good government. Therefore, the Edmonton-Whitemud PC Association recommends that three categories of seats are created. Based on the number of current seats in the current boundaries and using the latest population figures based on constituency boundaries available – which was 1986; that was one of the slides we saw – the categories would be as follows: (a) urban seats. These would be defined as having all the constituency totally or almost totally within an urban municipal boundary. Based on the current seats, there would be 40 urban seats. (b) Urban/rural

seats. These seats would contain a major population centre. We have based them on those centres defined by the Municipal Affairs department as cities, except for those included under urban seats and with one more exception, and their adjacent rural areas. We have identified 10 such seats. (c) Rural seats. Rural seats would be made up of smaller population centres linked by farm or other land, and there would be 33 rural seats. That's taking the present situation without recommending any changes to it.

Three, an average population factor for each category of seats would be determined separately by averaging the population of only the seats in each category: three categories, three averages. We recommend that a deviation limit from these averages be adopted. We support the necessity of a limited number of constituencies being beyond a standard deviation where justified on the basis of geographic or regional interests. A deviation of plus or minus 25 percent seems to have been generally accepted in a number of jurisdictions, but we recommend that the committee should consider whether there may be valid reasons for considering a deviation standard different from plus or minus 25 percent overall or a different deviation standard for each category.

Four, changes to the Act: (a) Adoption of our recommendations would require a number of changes in the Act. (b) Edmonton-Whitemud recommends that additional criteria be added to section 19, which is the section dealing with rural constituencies, in line with our earlier suggestions on page 2 of our submission. (c) We recommend a boundaries commission composed as follows: the number of members to be seven; the chairman to be a current or retired member of the judiciary; the Chief Electoral Officer to be a member; there to be three MLAs, two government and one opposition; there to be two members of the public at large, one from the north and one from the south; further, that the composition of the combined elected and public members should reflect the current urban/rural split, which would mean three urban and two rural members.

In conclusion, our association reiterates how important the concept of fairness is in determining areas of representation and that it is not fair to apply exactly the same standard to all parts of the province if we are indeed to have "good government."

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Donna. Jack or Jack, anything to add before we go to questions?

MR. KANE: No, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; thank you.
Yes, Stock.

MR. DAY: I have two quick questions, Mr. Chairman. Donna, you mentioned consideration of a different deviation factor. Would you suggest any?

MS FRASER: No. I guess it would be a matter of whether you look at the chicken or the egg. Justice McLachlin doesn't say there should be a plus or minus 25 percent. She says that that appears reasonable. It's not to say a 30 percent or a 20 percent might also be judged reasonable. We think there's a great deal of statistical work perhaps to be done that we didn't have the resources to do. The concept of a deviation is one that we support, but there may be a number of factors, including a

different deviation factor for each category, that we have not precisely proposed.

MR. DAY: All right. Thank you. In the composition you're suggesting for the commission, for the first three you mention – a judge, Chief Electoral Officer, and three MLAs – you spelled out how they could be chosen. Who, or how would you choose two members from the public at large?

MS FRASER: We haven't specified that. We would want it to be done in accordance with preserving the rural/urban composition, and that may have some influence. But presumably the Legislature, or whoever is in charge of appointing other commissioners, could do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? Anyone from the audience?

Thanks very much, Donna, Jack, and Jack.

MR. PRITCHARD: Is Paul Johnston here yet or back?

The next presenter will be Jan Reimer, mayor of Edmonton. She'll just be in right away.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'd like a cup of coffee or glass of juice, please feel free to help yourself.

[The committee recessed from 11:05 a.m. to 11:07 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

MS REIMER: Good morning. I've never been in this kind of a situation before, Mr. Bogle, but I'd like to certainly thank you and the committee for accommodating my schedule and for the opportunity to make the presentation today.

On behalf of my colleagues on council we really want to stress that fair representation is at the heart of our democratic system, and we claim that our system is based on a basic principle of one person, one vote. But if one citizen's vote is worth considerably more than another citizen's vote in terms of representation in the Legislature, then the principle of one person, one vote has been violated, and that is our situation in Alberta today. My message today is clear. The citizens of Edmonton are not fairly represented in the Legislature. Their votes are worth considerably less than the votes of citizens elsewhere in the province. On behalf of all eligible voters in Edmonton, I'm asking you to correct this unjust situation.

If I could just illustrate the problem. We can look at the largest constituency, Edmonton-Whitemud, where there are 31,536 eligible voters, almost four times as many as in Cardston, with 8,105, and almost three times as many as Cypress-Redcliff. When it comes to actual representation, the vote of a citizen in Edmonton-Whitemud is worth about one-quarter of a vote in Cardston. On average the number of electors in Edmonton ridings is 22,740, which is 21 percent greater than the average for the total province and 49.32 percent greater than the average for all areas excluding the two major urban centres, Edmonton and Calgary.

Your committee has considered applying the rule of 25 percent more or less than the provincial average. Eight Edmonton ridings have more eligible voters than the provincial average plus 25 percent. No Edmonton ridings have less than the average minus 25 percent. It is fair to conclude that Edmonton does not have fair representation in the Alberta

Legislature. To demonstrate how strongly members of city council feel about the need for more representation, I was mandated by all members of council to come and present that view, even though our formal submission to you will be officially adopted tomorrow at our regular council meeting.

Edmonton recognizes the particular needs of rural ridings. Council members have considered the difficulty of serving a very large geographic area, and we recognize that this factor must be considered as well. However, I note that several of the rural areas with the lowest numbers of voters are not the large ridings geographically. There is room for creating more equitable boundaries taking the geographic factor into consideration. I would also remind you that heavily populated urban areas have particular needs that require a fair voice in the provincial Legislature. At this point in Alberta's history it is fair to say that the urban voice is underrepresented in the Legislature. Given that this trend is towards increased urbanization, this situation is likely to continue, and it is not a temporary problem that will correct itself.

In looking at possible solutions, Edmonton city council considered two possible directions. The first option maintains the present number of 83 electoral divisions and redivides them using the average of 18,685 electors per division. This would increase the number of Edmonton MLAs from 17 to 21. A second option would guarantee a specified number of electoral divisions to the areas of the province outside of the two major cities and then allocate additional urban divisions based on the resulting average number of voters per division. For example, if the areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary were guaranteed the 48 divisions they presently have, the average number of electors would be just over 15,000 per division. Using that average, Edmonton would be allocated 25 MLAs and Calgary 28, to make a total of 101 members of the Legislature. I recognize that using this approach, boundaries outside of the two largest urban areas would have to be adjusted to be fair to the citizens of other cities, such as Medicine Hat, St. Albert, and the area of Sherwood Park, to name a few. These two directions were considered by the executive committee of Edmonton city council. With most councillors present, the second approach was favoured. That reflects the strong desire of councillors to ensure that additional representation for the large urban centres does not come at the expense of rural ridings.

There may be other possible solutions that meet the criterion of fair representation. I can say that the city of Edmonton would consider other reasonable solutions as long as our citizens gain the fair representation they do not have presently. When it comes to the basic criterion of fair representation and the need for significant change to make it, there is unanimous agreement by all the councillors of the city of Edmonton.

The formal submission will be approved tomorrow at our regular meeting of city council, and we'll certainly forward copies of that to you immediately. I'd like to thank you for considering our views.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Questions or comments from committee members? Yes, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Did council have a preference with respect to the (b) or (c) version, (b) being . . .

MS REIMER: I don't know what you're referring to with (b) and (c).

MS BARRETT: Sorry. The attachment 2 would suggest keeping the number of seats the same and increasing Edmonton and Calgary seats. The alternative would be to increase all of the seats, to 101. Did council have a preference?

MS REIMER: Council's preference was that we didn't want to take away seats from rural Alberta. I guess we don't want this to get into a rural/urban type of division. The principle is fair representation, and that would be, if we don't take those seats away, the latter option of increasing the urban seats, to 101.

MS BARRETT: But you would take the other one as acceptable?

MS REIMER: I think what we're saying is that we'd like to see that fair representation, but we don't want to get into that situation of pitting urban against rural. I don't think that's an advantage to anyone. We all have concerns, and they all need to be addressed in the Legislature, but we do want to make sure it is a fair system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Tom, and then Stock.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Your Worship. Has council had the opportunity to consider whether or not total population as opposed to just electoral population be considered in drawing boundaries?

MS REIMER: We haven't really looked at that, though I think when you look at that type of situation in Edmonton, we'd still be out by at least the 25 percent.

MR. SIGURDSON: Again, has council had the opportunity to consider the composition of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, or will council . . .

MS REIMER: No. We did not address as to how that electoral commission should be structured.

MR. SIGURDSON: Is that on your agenda tomorrow?

MS REIMER: No, it's not part of our submission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Your Worship, has council had the opportunity to get a legal opinion of the McLachlin case for its own purposes?

MS REIMER: Is this the B.C. case?

MR. DAY: Yes.

MS REIMER: Just a general one from our own city solicitor in terms of the plus or minus 25 percent. That's still a fairly large range, however. We try to have less of a range in our own wards, for instance.

MR. DAY: You mentioned right at the outset a strong focus on one person, one vote. In the McLachlin case the judge specifically said that Canadian history does not point to a strict interpretation of one person, one vote, that that's the American

experience, but in fact the Canadian is allowing for more regional representation if possible. Are you saying that you would tend to lean more to the American model as opposed to the Canadian model?

MS REIMER: Well, we're saying 4 to 1 is too far away from that fair representation.

MR. DAY: Just one other question. In terms of equality of voting power, if we could get your advice or input as a committee as we try and balance this question. The rural presentations have . . .

MS REIMER: No, we recognize the plus or minus and the need to adjust, certainly, but we just think it's too far out in terms of being fair.

MR. DAY: On the very issue of equality of voting power, when we're in the rural areas we hear the same thing, ironically, even though there is a ratio which might tend us to say the rural has an edge. We get presented with this, if you could help our committee, just as an example: if Edmonton needed provincial dollars for, let's say, sewer infrastructure in Edmonton - and I throw that out strictly as an example - there would be or there should be, I would think, about 17 MLAs in the Legislature clamouring for the provincial dollars for that type of infrastructure and provincial assistance. If it was the MLA for Grande Prairie and Grande Prairie needed assistance for their sewage infrastructure and provincial dollars for the same, there would be one MLA clamouring for that. What they're saying is that on issues like this, Edmonton or Calgary would have maybe 17 or 18 MLAs, Red Deer would have two, and out in Grande Prairie there would be one. They're saying they've lost equality of voting power there. What advice would you have?

MS REIMER: What could I say? Well, right now Edmonton and Calgary are specifically excluded from your sewer and infrastructure funding programs. We don't get a penny, but the regional and the rural areas get significant funding. I can look at the surrounding municipalities, the rural areas, where when they build their wastewater treatment plants, they got 90 percent of their capital expenditures paid for by the province. We don't have that.

MR. DAY: Yeah. I'm using that as an example. We could pick an issue like high schools or whatever, but just as an example requiring representation.

MS REIMER: You can pick any one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, not to debate that point, but Edmonton could join into the capital regional sewage treatment system if it wished to.

MS REIMER: And we would like to.

MR. DAY: Let's just call it issue A. If it was something for all of the city, let's say, of Edmonton or Calgary . . . Or Red Deer: there would be two MLAs petitioning on behalf of Red Deer for issue A. If it was Grande Prairie, there would be one. They're saying, "We need help that we don't get swamped." How do we respond? I'm asking that for . . .

MS REIMER: Well, I think you indicate that - MLAs, I imagine, are just like members of city council. You're elected to represent all of the citizens fairly and adequately. It's incumbent - just as it is with the ward system to look at the city interests, for the MLAs it's important to look at that provincial interest, and it is those principles that have to be applied.

Nevertheless, you can't turn your back on the fact that you need a fair level of representation, and I think that's how you look at it. When you look at funding of various rural initiatives, sewers and water, for example, are ones where the rural municipalities do get the funding. When you look at per capita expenditures again - and I look at roadway, for instance, where we have as a major centre a lot of people coming into Edmonton who are using the highway system. As the highway goes through the city of Edmonton, it becomes a local responsibility. So I think we have certainly been - and you can look at many programs. The major population areas have been excluded, I guess recognizing the limited availability of provincial funds. But I think it's fair to say that you need to have a fair system and that people will judge the issue on its merits.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

Thanks very much.

MS REIMER: Thank you.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could have Paul Johnston, David Thompson, and Ed Basaraba come up, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, David, we're pleased to start with you.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you. I thank the committee for the opportunity to make this presentation. I have a written version which I'll hand in afterwards.

I want to look at two things principally. One is the process the commission should be following, and the second is this issue of the relative size of constituencies. I think it's good there are these hearings at this stage so that there is public input into the process that will be followed, but I think that needs to continue. I think that's extremely important. In looking through various reports of various boundary commissions here in Alberta and other places, there seems to be one common thread after they hold their hearings. That is that they inevitably find that they lacked in making their initial proposals the local information necessary to make ridings which make sense locally and which allow for effective representation. That's inevitable. But what it leads to is that there are always, in almost every case, major changes made to the initial proposals following the hearings. That's good, and I think the fact that that happens points to the usefulness of the hearing process. But the problem then is that you've got these major changes and there's no further opportunity for public input.

So it seems to me it would be useful to have, in fact, two sets of hearings, and I was interested to hear that the earlier delegation suggested this. If there was an initial period before the preparation of the initial report of the commission in which people could make submissions that would suggest possible boundaries and would suggest things that are important to the community, then I think what would happen is that the initial proposals of the commission would be much more likely to meet the concerns of the public, and therefore there would be less need for major changes following that. Therefore, you wouldn't

have this situation where people felt they'd had major changes sprung on them without the opportunity to comment on them. So I think that two-stage process, though it may seem a little more cumbersome, will probably result in much better boundaries and probably boundaries that are also less controversial. So I would strongly support that process.

Turning to the whole matter of boundaries and the size of the constituencies, the primary view should be that we need to ensure the concept of representation by population. I think it's also very important that people get effective representation, and that means that the first needs to be modified somewhat. You need some deviations from absolute equality of representation, clearly, in order to meet local needs, but I think you do need approximate equality in the populations of districts if one person, one vote is to have any meaning. I think we have to be very conscious of that. Historically, as everybody is aware, we've never had that in Alberta. There has always been a large disparity between urban and rural ridings. Currently the ratio of the average urban riding voting population to the average rural riding is 1.65, and what's more, redistribution has never really ended that disparity. It's not just a temporary phenomenon. The smallest it's ever been was 1.49, and that was in 1930. In fact, it's been increasing over the last few years. That's the average. It means that the average urban riding is 25 percent over the provincial average; the average rural riding is 25 percent under.

In addition, you have for individual cases these extreme examples of ratios of 3 and 4, and I think we really do have to look at whether, regardless of our desire to maintain effective representation for the various parts of this province, it's valid to have anybody's vote worth only a third or a quarter of some other person's vote. I think there have to be some limits, and clearly we need to re-examine this. We need to re-examine whether that disparity is still justified. It's true, clearly, that too large a riding geographically isn't possible to represent, but it's also true that the historic pattern of ridings was based on a much earlier time when it was much harder to get around, and we no longer have a situation where it takes a day to cross a riding.

In addition, I think it's also important to remember that there are a number of things that can make a riding difficult to represent. One of those is a riding being rural in character, but there are many others. A riding which is very diverse in terms of linguistic or cultural or ethnic groups is more difficult to represent. Inner-city districts often have a lot of social problems or there's a very high degree of transience of the residents, and that makes them more difficult to represent. Suburban areas in cities or areas around cities are often growing rapidly. That causes need for new services, so they have problems that are perhaps greater than the average. In fact, those areas are precisely the ones that are usually the least represented in terms of population because they have the large population growth.

A maximum deviation of 25 percent from the average has been proposed as suitable by many people. I think that has a lot of merit, but I think in doing that, it has to be viewed as a limit for extreme cases. In those cases where you have exceptionally low population density or very poor transportation or communications, I think in general the ridings in the north of this province would qualify, but I would question whether a lot of the other rural ridings would perhaps qualify as exceptional. Other than those exceptional ridings, I think the deviations should in general be much less. In other words, the concerns for the community of interests in drawing the boundaries should be

important but secondary to the achievement of some reasonable population balance.

I think if you look at what's been done in other jurisdictions, this is certainly possible. The current federal ridings in Alberta have an average population for urban ridings of 10 percent over the average; the average rural riding is 9 percent below. In other areas it's even less. In Ontario the average urban federal riding is only 3 percent over the provincial average; the average rural one is only 3 percent under. That excludes northern Ontario, as I suspect that any such treatment in Alberta would exclude northern Alberta.

Just to show how this could perhaps work, not to make a detailed suggestion, if one maintained the current 83 constituencies, then based on the voting populations of Calgary and Edmonton, if you assign 20 and 22 seats respectively, you'd get an average voting population that was 3 percent and 5 percent respectively above the provincial average. The other larger centres would need to be dealt with, and one would probably have to include in the cases of - well, Lethbridge and Red Deer presumably are still okay, but in some of the other areas, like Medicine Hat and St. Albert, one would have to include some surrounding areas, so there'd sort of be an additional seat there. That would then result in a remaining number of seats of 33 for the rural and northern areas of the province, and that would give an average population of 7 percent below the average. So one could achieve a much greater balance while still maintaining, I think, a reasonable level of difference between the urban and rural ridings, which I think is justifiable to some extent but a much smaller extent than is current.

Finally, just very briefly addressing this idea of community of interest, I think in addressing boundaries, clearly it's important that in drawing the boundaries, one is looking at the local factors. I think in doing that, one has better representation, because if one has a more cohesive riding, then that interest is better represented in the Legislature and, therefore, in public and in the open as opposed to various competing interests having to be sorted out in the consciences of individual members. I think that idea of having the discussion in the open due to fairly cohesive ridings needs to be kept in mind. Of particular concern in urban areas are such things as keeping together any particularly strong concentrations of particular population groups that have common interests, so that those areas can be effectively represented.

Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any questions or comments? Pam?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Could you explain what sort of guidelines you would be suggesting with respect to the commission's treatment of community of interest? I mean, would you put that into the guidelines?

MR. THOMPSON: In the commission guidelines I've read for other commissions - I've never had a copy of one for the Alberta provincial commission, but I know that for the federal ones it's there. It is there as a secondary item to the achievement of the population balance within the range that's allowed. Clearly the commission has to have some idea of how to draw boundaries. Just saying that the populations should be within such a range clearly doesn't let you actually draw boundaries. You need some guidance, and I think that in drawing those boundaries, that is the way one in fact draws them, allowing for

the population balance that one asks for.

MS BARRETT: Good. Thanks.

MR. CARDINAL: I just have a quick comment for David. That's a good presentation, but one thing – as a rural MLA and, specifically, from northern Alberta we're not so fortunate to have a high standard of living like the cities. You mentioned how hard it is to represent urban ridings. You know, I wouldn't want to go into detail because it would take too long to tell you how tough it is in rural Alberta, but I'll just give you an example. We have some communities there that still face 89 percent unemployment, communities up to 4,000. That's just one example. The standard of living is a disaster in some areas yet, so those are some of the issues we have to deal with. But I'll leave it at that because it would take too much time to go through my riding, what standard of living we maintain out there yet compared to Edmonton. It's a tough one, so I'll just leave it at that.

MR. THOMPSON: If I might just say, I think the point I wanted to make is that there is a lot of diversity in this province. There are a lot of differences and a lot of things that need to be represented, a lot of problems that need to be represented. Those are not uniquely divided in terms of rural versus urban. There are a lot of ways to look at things, and to somewhat arbitrarily say that rural problems are great and therefore they need more representation versus urban I think is not really the right way to look at it. I think you have to look at each area and look at the problems and the difficulties of representing that area in terms of defining these communities of interest that one accepts.

MR. CARDINAL: But I think, David, what I'm putting across – and I'll just be really brief – is to have equal and effective representation for all Albertans, and that relates to, basically, the standard of living being maintained. The average standard of living of a centre like Edmonton and Calgary would be considerably higher than my constituency; that's all I'm saying. So somehow the way it is set up right now, even with close to 50-50 representation, my constituents still enjoy a lower standard of living than the urban people, so we need to consider issues like that when we design the system. Because that's the final . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Anyone else? Okay.
Thank you, David.
Paul.

MR. JOHNSTON: It's indeed a pleasure to be able to appear before your committee today. My name is J. Paul Johnston, and I'm an associate professor of political science at the University of Alberta. I'm appearing today on behalf of the Edmonton-Strathcona constituency association of the Alberta New Democrats at the request of members of its executive, whose request was based on the fact that I have certain special knowledge of various matters before your committee through my occupation. I want to present to you a number of points that we would like to urge upon the committee in its deliberations. Some of them will cover ground already dealt with by David, and therefore I'll try to keep those matters to a minimum.

Alberta has a long history of malapportionment. This was noted by David in his comments. In 1969 Professor Anthony

Long of the University of Lethbridge published an article in which he assessed the quality of representation that existed in the 1967 Legislature just prior to the establishment of the electoral boundaries commissions. Dealing with that on a number of measures, he came to the conclusion that it was subject to a degree of malapportionment that he described as ranging from poor to terrible. While there's been some improvement over the years, that description still applies in a number of respects. The various measures that Long used I've also computed and can indicate to you simply to illustrate this point. In 1989, for example, the ratio between the size of the largest constituency and that of the smallest constituency in terms of its population was 3.891; that is, the largest one was 389 percent of the smallest one. Long used a legislative discrimination index, and that figure is .808. That indicates the amount of representation that, in this case, urban areas of the province would have as a ratio of what they would be entitled to on a straight population equality standard. Other measures have also been brought in, and I'll not go further on this point.

Urban/rural malapportionment has been discussed by a number of people today; in particular, the effect, in terms of Edmonton, by a major urban area and, of course, more generally by David. The percentage of the electorate that was located in formally designated urban constituencies in 1986 was 61.86 percent. In 1989 it has increased slightly to 62.86 percent. The ratios again are instructive. David has already indicated those. Again we have a clear indication that the voting power of urban citizens in Alberta is being diluted through an overrepresentation of rural areas. I want to bring up, in that regard, a proposal from the group I represent, and that is to urge the committee to move toward correcting the disparities that exist on an urban/rural basis and to do so in more than a piecemeal fashion. We recognize that doing so very quickly, perhaps on the lines suggested by Mayor Reimer, would create difficulties and certainly be controversial. It is probably the case, however, that the committee can recommend changes that would represent a significant movement toward that kind of standard and help to ease the transition to a situation where that urban/rural malapportionment would be eliminated.

A second point I want to bring up is one which hasn't been touched on, and that has to do with rural ridings. If we look solely at those electoral divisions that are formally designated as rural divisions and break them up into various regions in the province, you can note that there is some measure of regional disparity in the representation among rural ridings. In particular, those ridings in the northern part of the province and the west-central part of the province are underrepresented to the advantage of ridings in the east-central and particularly in the southern part of the province. For example, if we take a ratio of the average size of constituencies in the north as divided by the average size of constituencies in the south in the 1989 election, the northern constituencies are 35 percent larger than those in the southern part. This is excluding any urban ridings. Similarly, the ratio between the west-central ridings and the southern ridings is 1.469, almost 47 percent larger than those in the rural areas. We feel that the committee ought to try to make recommendations that will move toward removing these regional disparities among rural ridings as part of an overall plan to try to remove or move closer to a standard of one man, one vote.

That leads me to my third point, and that is that we would urge the committee to move with all reasonable dispatch toward implementing the principle of one person, one vote as reflected

in the practice of establishing constituencies with equal size populations. As can generally be demonstrated, there is, of course, a philosophical argument to be made for this in terms of fair representation. There's a practical argument to be made in terms of the interests of particular groups. The size of the urban electorate is growing. It's not an electorate that can be ignored continually. It's a particularly young electorate, so it's going to be around for a while. So there are practical concerns there.

There's also the possible threat of a legal challenge following on the decision rendered in the Dixon case in British Columbia, a legal challenge which I think would most likely be successful unless some effort was made to indicate that significant movement is being made toward accomplishing some measure of one person, one vote in the province.

In that regard we would need to see certain specific changes made to the rules that are applied in setting out constituencies. The American practice has been to distinguish between what is called apportionment and what is called districting. We in Canada roll these two processes together in one description, which we call distribution or redistribution. The decision as to how many seats will be assigned to urban areas as opposed to rural areas or to one region of the province as opposed to another is an apportionment decision. For the most part, that has been a made-in-Alberta practice by decision of the Legislature. It is not something that is a matter to be considered by the Electoral Boundaries Commission, nor do I think it should be. However, if we are to continue the practice of distinguishing between urban and rural electoral divisions, we should provide some criteria for establishing what constitutes an urban constituency. At present that is a matter of the whim of the current Legislature.

For example, in 1979 to '82 the towns of Camrose, Drumheller, Grande Prairie, and Wetaskiwin were arbitrarily designated as urban ridings or as areas in which urban electoral divisions were to be established. Sherwood Park, as you will recall, was included in the Edmonton delegation. That was changed for the 1986 and '89 elections. Those four ridings were reclassified now as rural ridings. We should have some definition of what constitutes urban and rural, one that reflects the kinds of interests that are set against one another, in this case, without having to emphasize any conflict between urban and rural voters in the province.

We also need changes that will make sure that when those rules which are set out in the Act and which allow some restraint on application of a strict equality rule are applied to overrule what should be the dominant criterion here – that is, a population criterion – some case is made to demonstrate that there is, say, a distinct community of interest that's being served, that there are regional concerns about the difficulty of delivery of services or the ability of representatives to represent their constituents. At present that's not done. At present it is taken on the claim of people making submissions. We have evidence, we have techniques to assess that available to us now, and some effort should be made to set up rules that would allow the members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission to try to establish what case can be made for overriding the population criterion.

Let me make one last comment, and that has to do with the composition of the commission. We would recommend that the size of the commission be reduced to five members, that following the federal practice the chairman of the commission be a judge or retired judge appointed in the manner currently specified under the Act, that the Chief Electoral Officer of the

province continue to be a member of the commission, and that the remaining three members be private citizens appointed to the commission by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on nomination by the Speaker of the Assembly, such nominations to be approved by the government leader and the Leader of the Official Opposition, the practice presently adopted.

Let me close by giving you a reason for that. First of all, the major reason for adopting independent boundary commissions was to move away from the partisan atmosphere of the Legislature and the opportunity to create gerrymandering. In the attention we have given to the question of population equality, we have overlooked, generally, the question of whether any kind of gerrymandering has taken place in drawing boundaries. To a certain extent the apportionment question that establishes overrepresentation of rural areas functions practically as a gerrymander in many respects. It was for this purpose that independent boundary commissions were established. The boundary commission in Alberta has never been wholly independent; it's been semi-independent, and changes that were made in 1985 made it less so. I think it is time for members of the Legislature to no longer serve on that commission. After all, any recommendations that come forward have to be approved by the Legislature anyway. The final approval lies with them. They should not be involved in the actual districting process. That at least makes clear that there is no evidence of partisan involvement in drawing those boundaries, and it provides us a stronger case should a legal challenge be brought.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you, J. Paul. Any questions from the committee?

Yes, Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Johnston, I appreciate your presentation and the work you've put into it. I need to continue to ask the question which – and I don't ask it facetiously or from the point of view of debate. I ask it to you; I've asked it of Mayor Reimer; I ask it in rural and urban settings, because we need an answer to it and I don't think we have one as a committee. But as we focus on the thing of equality of voting power and one person, one vote – strictly one person, one vote – which the justice has suggested is the American model and not representative of the Canadian experience, how do we balance out? For instance, in the city of Edmonton's presentation, 17 electoral divisions represent 20 percent of the Legislature and the number of electors is actually 24 percent, so there's a 4 percent variance there, which isn't gigantic but it is a variance. But on issue A – and you pick the issue; it doesn't matter – that will affect all of Edmonton, 20 percent of the MLAs will speak to that issue and try and influence the other MLAs around them. On issue A affecting, for example, Grande Prairie, one MLA, less than 1 percent of the Legislature, will speak to that issue and try and affect other MLAs around him or her. That is the perception in the rural areas: that on issues, the equality of voting power is not one person, one vote but, in fact, the number of MLAs representing an area, and they feel they get hopelessly outnumbered, outgunned, on a particular issue. How do we address that?

MR. JOHNSTON: I understand the concern, Mr. Day. The difficulty is precisely as you've said it.

First, let me make a side comment. The notion of one person, one vote and the idea of independent electoral boundary commissions is not an American product; neither of them. They

are both British. The one person, one vote notion goes back to 17th century England and the Puritan revolution. Indeed, if there is a theory of representation that's wholly American, it's the madisonian approach, which I feel most Canadians and rural Canadians would favour, and that is that we should represent communities of interest, however large or small they are. That's the American theory of representation.

To go back to your original question, part of this deals with the fact that we make a simple, dichotomous distinction between urban and rural. Now, Edmonton, which Mayor Reimer represents as mayor and which Ms Barrett represents as one of the MLAs from Edmonton, is quite different as an urban setting than Red Deer, which you represent. Red Deer is listed as an urban riding; Grande Prairie is not; Fort McMurray is not. Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie and Red Deer and Camrose can, as categories, have a range of interests that they share in common. We have a tendency to assume that there's more homogeneity among urban constituents and more disparity among rural or small town constituents than actually exists. It's also the case that there are certainly opportunities for coalitions to form among people representing rural ridings or people representing ridings that are dominated by a single small town or city. Looked at in that perspective, your MLA from Grande Prairie is not on his own. He's part of a legislative process that will take place in any Legislature on any range of questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, John Paul.

Ladies and gentlemen, I've been polling the members of the committee, and while a couple have to slip away for a few minutes for other meetings or to rearrange their schedules, we're prepared to continue on until 1 o'clock. We're also meeting tomorrow evening at 7 o'clock, so if there's anyone who is here and patiently has been waiting to make a presentation who can't stay any longer, if tomorrow evening at 7 o'clock would be more convenient, we could accommodate you then. If, on the other hand, you're prepared to do it now, we'll certainly carry on. We have eight more presenters. All right?

MR. JUNCK: Mr. Chairman, maybe it would be in order to — because some of us have the opportunity to make our presentations, like, in Barrhead . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would certainly be fine.

MR. JUNCK: We would like the opportunity, if we could have from the administration a time schedule of when we are scheduled.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll ensure that you are first on at Barrhead.

MR. JUNCK: That's not what I'm getting at. I would like to know, now that we're here, if we're going to be next on the agenda or further down the agenda than we could stay. If not, then we'll have to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see. Can you tell us the list?

MR. PRITCHARD: Your name again?

MR. JUNCK: Harold Junck, town of Swan Hills.

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, you're in the last group coming, so

there'll be one, two, three, four, five before the three of you.

MR. JUNCK: I think then, Mr. Chairman, we would like to present ours at Barrhead.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We'll have you on first.

MR. JUNCK: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Everyone else comfortable? Okay. We'll try to keep our questions and responses brief.

MS MAJESKI: I have the same question as the Barrhead delegation. I'd like to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, why don't we go through the list, Bob?

MS MAJESKI: Yes. Could you read that out?

MR. PRITCHARD: Yeah, I will right away.

MS BARRETT: I have it in front of me. I think I've got this right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; can you do it, Pam?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. We've got Ed Basaraba, Henry Tomlinson, Mark Gregory and Richard Plain, Joan Majeski, Rae Shwetz, Doug Rice and Steve Chodan, and Jean De Champlain.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Now, I hope we haven't missed anyone.

Okay, let's go ahead then. Ed.

MR. BASARABA: I'm just going to hand out my presentation here.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Ed Basaraba. I live at RR 2, St. Albert, in the constituency of Westlock-Sturgeon. I personally live one mile from the city of Edmonton and one mile from the city of St. Albert. Prior to the May 6, 1986, election we were in the riding of St. Albert. Since then the boundaries were changed, and now we are in Westlock-Sturgeon. The area that we live in is predominantly composed of acreage people, the Namao air force base, and the balance, farmers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ed, I hesitate to interrupt, and I apologize profoundly. I'm remiss in not having said at the beginning that our committee is not looking at specific lines drawn between constituencies. That will be a task and function of the commission. I've been making that verbal comment at other meetings, and it just slipped my mind this morning at our outset. What we've done, though, is that we've given assurance in two ways. First, we've said that the recommendations on specific boundary changes or poll changes will be passed on to the commission once it's struck, keeping in mind that the Chief Electoral Officer, who's on holiday right now and sits as an ex officio member of the committee, is here and hearing those comments. So we're passing those on, and secondly, we are inviting people to make their submissions once the commission is struck.

Having said that, could I get you to give us your thoughts on the matters that really are within our mandate? Re the makeup

of the commission, any thoughts on the political map, are the parameters we should use in that process.

MR. BASARABA: Okay. Basically, I guess my presentation was based on where I stand in the constituency and where it stands with the rest of the problem. St. Albert, which has a larger population than currently has been suggested – my suggestion was to include part of the rural ridings: the rural ridings to the east and rural ridings to the west. These particular people who are in both of those regions are urban in nature and, as such, associate themselves more with Edmonton and more, in particular, with St. Albert. Basically, it was my proposal that if St. Albert were to be split, we'd like to be included in that particular region.

Earlier it was mentioned that possibly rural ridings don't mix with urban. A good example is Peace River riding, which has the city of Peace River in there. Fort McMurray has the city of Fort McMurray. Grande Prairie has the city of Grande Prairie. Stony Plain has the city of Spruce Grove and the town of Stony Plain. Sherwood Park has the hamlet of Sherwood Park. Clover Bar has the city of Fort Saskatchewan. Wetaskiwin-Leduc has the city of Wetaskiwin and the city of Leduc in it. Camrose has the city of Camrose in it. Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South have the city of Red Deer in them. Three Hills has the city of Airdrie in it. Drumheller has the city of Drumheller in it. Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East have the city of Lethbridge in them.

So my proposal that St. Albert be split and additional rural ridings be included would be no different than what I've just mentioned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Ed.

Any comments or questions from the committee? Anyone else? Okay.

Thank you Ed.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could have Henry Tomlinson, Mark Gregory, and Dr. Richard Plain.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Henry, go ahead please.

MR. TOMLINSON: Chairman Bob and members of the panel, thank you very much for the opportunity to bring our thoughts on behalf of the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops Ltd. to this committee. The federation and its members represent about 76 percent of the settled rural area of the province. Now we are concerned about the possible makeup of a new Legislative Assembly should your committee lean more heavily to the numbers of voters rather than to the duties, roles, obligations of MLAs, whether they be urban or rural.

It appears to us that there is a most obvious imbalance in the duties of an MLA outside of the House sittings, which results from the fact that although there may be a smaller number of voters, the rural MLA must be available to far more numerous councils, school boards, hospital boards, and a much wider variety of groups. We are aware of MLAs who do have to deal with upwards of 30 or 40 different councils and boards to say nothing of other self-interest groups, while in each of the two major cities – and I believe that we're talking about the urban area – you've got 18 or 19 MLAs to represent one council, two school boards, and perhaps two or three hospital boards as well as the self-interest groups. Again, according to how far you are from the capital city, the rural MLAs spend considerably more

time traveling to and fro to keep in touch with their constituencies and to keep appointments at the myriad of meetings they must keep.

The rural people depend on local MLAs and their constituency offices to act on their behalf far more so, from our point of view, than the urban ones. Because the departments and the seat of government are more or less just down the street, whether it be in Edmonton or Calgary, access by the average citizen to government is much more available to those who live in the city. I know; I live very close to the city, so I'm very accessible to it, whereas for some of my colleagues it is not that simple. So they do tend to rely on the local MLA a lot more than the average person in the city. The MLA gets involved in other areas that may not be obvious, such as tourism, local development, and industrial development. The local MLA must spearhead and lead that along, whereas he's got lots of company in the cities, and again, cities would have the privilege of calling on government staff a lot more. In short, we believe that the rural MLA has a much higher workload. I don't know why we're defending the MLAs here, but in a backhanded way it's saying that if they have a higher workload, then access to that MLA is limited.

Now, to further increase that ripple by increasing the size of the rural constituencies only adds to the imbalance. As mentioned earlier this morning, we particularly note that the northern half of the province has only six MLAs, which includes two cities. In the north, again, recent development may add considerably to the voter count in the next enumeration. It's very important that our cities continue to grow through diversification, and it's much more important that the rural area of the entire province, which includes the smaller cities, grows, and grows along with the cities. The two major cities can only prosper if the rural base prospers at the same time, and that's more or less echoing what a previous speaker said this morning.

The government of this province has long had the policy of decentralization, and we agree that this policy is important within the provinces as well as it is within Canada. As Mr. Taylor said this morning, it's very important that what we're showing to the rest of Canada we should be showing to ourselves. I believe we've been fairly served as the system is, and we'd like to see it continue, although we wouldn't go so far as to say that every riding has to remain as is.

In reviewing the numbers in the two cities – and if you're using the 25 percent plus or minus, with a simple readjustment of the boundaries in Edmonton you're still within the 25 percent limit – I notice two or three ridings in Edmonton that are down around the 15,000 voter number. If you simply reallocate the boundaries in the city of Edmonton, you're still within the 25 percent. I think our number comes out to 22,000, something like that. It hadn't occurred to us that the total population might be a more fair way. In thinking about that, I agree with that, being that the only ones that are not included today, basically, in the voter count are the young people, and let's face it, they're the people who are going to be paying the bills in another 10 years. I think perhaps that would be a more fair way, Mr. Chairman, to divide up our province.

Without getting into specific ridings, if you look at the numbers that are already at Athabasca, Whitecourt, and Rocky Mountain House, these are developing areas. If you took the enumeration in those areas right now, I think you'd find them to be within the 25 percent.

I think there's something else. There are two things. The councils of the cities tend to get more use and more help from

media than a riding 300 miles from Edmonton, for example. I sometimes wonder how some of these MLAs who live 300 or 400 miles from the city and try to commute get their job done in the same time as the urban MLAs do. I think there's a great imbalance in the workload, and I guess what I'm trying to say is: don't further add to that imbalance, as we see it.

Mr. Chairman, there are lots of things I could add to that, but time's running short.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Henry.
Questions? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Tomlinson, would you support the notion that the party that receives the greatest number of votes should probably form the government?

MR. TOMLINSON: Yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: Would you then see that if you had the current ratio where you've got 30 percent of the population residing in rural Alberta with 50 percent of the seats, perhaps a minority of the population might form the government?

MR. TOMLINSON: I believe that would be highly unlikely, but . . . I haven't had time to work those kinds of numbers out.

MR. SIGURDSON: It just happened in Saskatchewan.

MR. TOMLINSON: However, I think you'll find that in most elections you might have a 55 percent turnout in the country and you'll have a 45 percent turnout in the cities. So that could happen, I suppose. But I think it's only the voters' fault themselves if they allow that to happen.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. That's fine. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

MR. DAY: Just a comment on that previous question. I guess any number of ridings could be looked at. If you look at the number of people running representing the parties, add up what the first person past the post got in terms of votes and all the other people, I think it's fair to argue that in many, many jurisdictions – provincially, federally, and internationally, in fact – if your party system is first past the post, they've not actually garnered the most number of votes, regardless of turnout.

Is there a feeling – if I can ask you this. We hear a concern about alienation or the potential for alienation of rural people: a sense of alienation from the legislative process if the MLA numbers increase in the cities. Is there a feeling of alienation out there now, do you think, Mr. Tomlinson, or is the feeling, as you sense it, that things are pretty well okay as it is; leave it? Are people right now feeling alienated much the same as, maybe, Alberta does in terms of central Canada?

MR. TOMLINSON: I don't think the people are feeling alienated now. I don't think so. But I think any significant loss in the number of representation in the country would be felt somewhat, perhaps in more areas than others. But I think a loss of assistance, I suppose, if you will, the further spreading out of the local representative would not be greeted with enthusiasm; I can tell you that. Because of the time, because of the numerous committees, boards, and everything of a rural MLA – unless

I'm way off base in the area of the cities – their time is so limited now that any dilution of that is going to add to the problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Okay. Thanks very much, Henry.

Mark, I understand that you have an overview, and then, Richard, you're going to follow up?

DR. PLAIN: Yes, that's correct.

MR. GREGORY: That's right, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Dr. Plain and I represent the views of the St. Albert Progressive Conservative Association, and we have four points we'd like to present this morning. The first point is that we want to thank you very much for the opportunity to share our views with you on this important topic.

We think that the present system, the traditional system, isn't working very efficiently. We recommend that we maintain or slightly reduce the number of electoral divisions. We also would like you to consider reducing the spread of representation between large and small constituencies to try and achieve a greater equality. We would like you also to consider that a boundaries commission be set up after each general election to keep fine-tuning the system and keep that equality and fairness in place; finally, that you consider the issue of municipal boundaries. Where there is a clean and fair fit but all things being equal, the major objective should be to obtain a closer relationship between the population of a region and its representation within the Legislature.

My colleague, Dr. Plain, is going to provide you with a little more detail on those points. Richard.

DR. PLAIN: Thanks, Mark.

Members of the committee, point 1 on the first page of our representation, I guess, relates to the obvious, the figures that you provided to everyone. If you turn to the graph that's attached, you can see something that, I guess, disturbed us as a group and a bit on an individual basis. But under our existing system as it stands now – given that it's worked its way through and the rest – reading the list at the extreme points: 31,536 electors in Edmonton-Whitemud, and the low end, having the same representation, is 8,105 people in Cardston. Now, there are variations on that theme across the line, back and forth. We feel that that variation, that system that allows that to happen – though everyone's working on it – fails Albertans. That system has failed. So the question is – and that is, of course, what your committee is about – how best to reform that, recognizing our tradition, recognizing the special needs, but recognizing the need to not ever see anything of that type ever show up again in this province in its history. How would one go about that though? We can all talk about what we'd like to do, but how do you go about it, of course? That's the answer you're working with, and I don't presuppose to provide the answer, but I would share a view or two with you that might be instructive.

The first is that we believe that in the rating system – and you're right; you're dead right in terms of insisting on maintaining the reasoning that one man, one vote is not an acceptable thing in the province. How large should that factor be? To go back to that graph again, you look at these lines that we drew in, because one of the suggestions was centred around a so-

called 25 percent variance. So that was centred around an average of about 15,500, I guess, for the province: an upper one of about 23,000 or 24,000 and a lower one of around 14,000. But if you look at the range of that, it means the lower one at 14,000 and the upper one at 23,356 give us a 66 or 67 percent variance to start with. So we say equality in Alberta is a 67 percent difference in the number of electors per riding; well, a lot of you on that could say 50 or something in between. Certainly we believe we cannot have one man, one vote, for many of the reasons that have been attributed here, but if we start at a 67 percent variance, then eight years later we could be back to that 200 and 300, depending on what happens, because eight years and two general elections, if that's how it turns out – mind you, they could be shorter, depending on the circumstances. But if you get a 9 percent or 8 percent compound rate of growth, that would double, you know, in eight or nine years.

That's why we suggest that you might think about doing something that would be fairly easy to do: annually we undertake the review and the revision. Just given the unique circumstances of Alberta, we make the adjustments, we go through the process, and ease into this, so we don't get eight years down the line and needing major and radical restructuring. The theories are not easily digested, not easily incorporated: that now, you know, the next community is joining you or perhaps leaving you. And everyone can relate to that: the community, the trading areas, the MLAs on the other side. Now it just accumulates and accumulates, and bang, it can turn out to be a massive dislocation. So a system that perhaps reflected Alberta in a more stable environment, where growth was slower and changes were not so dynamic, with that after the two general elections thing – I think that given the evidence and given what's happened, perhaps practically we should maybe think seriously about the adjustment after every election, with all that entails. I know what that means. But I think it's a gradual approach; it's based on actually what's occurred. It doesn't get anybody too far down the line. We don't ask somebody to project things in this province for eight years ahead. I mean, economists – and we gave up on that a long time ago, but other people may be a little better off than we are. So that's one thing we suggest would be a practical way of going about it.

The actual factor as to how large that should be? Well, we wish you good luck on that in coming up with those sides. We just say the outcome, at least from a value judgment, to start with 66 percent between the high and the low and then move to it even getting wider over the two general elections: I don't think that's fair. So that's why the rule of review it halfway through, look at it, and then make the adjustment, might be a fair way of approaching it. But never coming to equality.

The other one. Mark has touched on the municipal boundaries. We also, of course, support probably the number of electoral divisions. To add more to try to resolve matters that way, to move to the direction we think we need to move, would involve such a large adjustment that the benefits from that would not warrant the cost.

If I might speak just now a bit as an individual in terms of experience. You know, Mr. Chairman, my mother's family . . .

We're part of the founding families in the Fort Edmonton area. My grandmother was born here in 1880 and went to St. Albert when the Riel rebellion was on. I was born on a farm and raised in a rural community; my family all live in an urban one. I have relatives urban, rural, and back and forth; brothers farming; others in urban; other sides. I've belonged to a constituency in which we had so-called rural and urban in terms

of the St. Albert constituency when we went out to it, Legal and Bon Accord and Vimy in a rural, and farming in other areas. And I personally, as an Albertan with that type of background, Mr. Chairman, resent the fact that somehow there is something so unique that an urban Albertan can't understand the concerns and issues of rural Alberta or that rural Alberta will not do the same. I'm an Albertan; my family's been Albertan; I think the majority of people here are Albertans and will do the right thing. I think to when I was mayor of the city of St. Albert and we got our boundaries established. All of a sudden they were changed, and bang, people who have been here since 1860 are a few feet outside the boundaries. "Sorry, you know; too bad. You're in rural Alberta now." These guys can't figure it out, what's been going on for the last hundred years.

This is an artificial, in my opinion, overwrought position that shouldn't play a major role in it. It's important that there are important distinctions in the economic concerns and the social concerns, and you get a better responsiveness from people related to it. But to somehow say that there are two classes of Albertans, that they're too "we cannot understand it," and that's the basis: no. Use your other good basis for the variance: on the economics and industry and other sides, but don't distinguish us on urban and rural and other sides. This is just the view from a member of a fourth generation Albertan group. I don't like it in that context.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Richard and Mark.

Questions or comments? Yes, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Thanks for the graph. It's good. Under item 4, municipal boundaries, are you basically arguing that the commission should be told to keep in mind community of interest when drawing boundaries? Is that so?

DR. PLAIN: Yeah, where it's possible. Some of these are just about impossible. But I could think of a community – indeed, my home community where I grew up, in Westlock – where you get three different special boundaries just covering the municipality. If that has to happen, well, it has to happen, but it really makes it difficult for the communities, unless there's just no other alternative. So where possible, that should be one of the factors that everyone should come up against and check that out in terms of the actual reviews, what we can do to try to keep that as much as we can, and then weigh it against the other factors.

MR. GREGORY: We have a strong urban constituency now with an excellent member, and I think we'd like to see that approach continue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Pam, do you have a second one?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. You got into wishing us good luck when it comes to figuring out what sort of variance would be allowed, and thank you for those good wishes. I want to give you an idea of a presentation we had – actually we've had a couple of them, but one of the very first ones we had right here in Edmonton several months ago. A guy came up and said that, you know, chances are, if you say 25 percent variance, that's what you're going to get all over the map; this is what you're really going to get. You're not going to get them as the exception; they're going to be the rule. He said maybe it's smarter that what you tell the commission is go for voter parity,

and if you write out your reasons for the exceptions, then maybe we'll allow it. What do you think of that?

DR. PLAIN: I think that's an approach, but I guess, given my background and views on it, I would sooner come in and try to reason about why it should be 15 or 10 percent; if I could think, across this wide province, of some way of coming up with the magic number.

I think it gets back, basically, to hearing people of goodwill and intelligence, hearing their representations, looking at these implications, looking at what Albertans view as fair, and then establishing a few of those and then coming up to it. The rest of us don't have the opportunity of really getting the feel for the province in the way you do. I didn't mean to be facetious about good luck, but that's why I think you're going to be in a better position to get a feel on that than any one of us from a region or a side, unless of course it's somebody who's studied the matter in considerable detail and could see that.

Our view is simply that, you know, as it stood, we start out at 67 percent. And boy, oh boy, if that runs for two elections and it gets to 100 and 150 percent or something, I just think that's not very right. But practically you've got to start somewhere, and there are going to be variations. So you need to form an idea, I suspect, among the committee as to what you feel you'd like to try to think Albertans would be willing to settle on, and then try to run that.

MS BARRETT: One more question, if I can. Are you really saying that if you start out with the 25 percent either way, which really does come to 66 and a third or two-thirds percent variance, if you want to pare the deviation down, it should done incrementally? Is that sort of implicit to what you're saying?

DR. PLAIN: Well, as I'm saying, you're starting out with your provincial average and then you pick 20 or 25 or whatever you come up with, and then saying that, you know, the two general elections are just too long; things really can get out of whack on that. Our suggestion was, well, maybe a relatively simple way of doing that, rather than trying to guess things over eight years in Alberta – just think eight years back what . . .

MS BARRETT: No, I understood that.

DR. PLAIN: . . . why not actually reconvene the process after every general election and make the adjustments then?

MS BARRETT: But you wouldn't adjust your deviations at each time.

DR. PLAIN: I don't know what the factor should be. That's up to you. I mean whether you're 20 or 25 or what you start with, just don't let it run for two general elections.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stock.

MR. DAY: Dick, just a comment and a question. I appreciate your heartfelt appeal that we don't classify rural and urban: two different classes of citizens. I make that appeal myself at these hearings when I hear people saying rural MLAs work hard and urban don't, or urban work hard and rural don't. I've got rural and urban in my constituency, so I say I work harder than

anybody here.

The fact of the matter is that as hard as we try to make that same appeal that you've made, the reality is that the feeling is there, and the speech you've just made, or that I might make trying to argue against that, is the same speech central Canadian politicians make when they say there aren't second class citizens; we're all in Canada together. But those of us out here in the colonies and the hinterland don't feel that, so the feeling is very real. That's my comment.

If we go after every general election, should it ever develop in Alberta that we have minority party coalition situations – I don't know if that ever would get to that place a hundred years from now – and you had an election and then, in fact, a non-confidence vote and a year later the government falls and another election, what happens in those situations? Do you still do the review? Or is there a backup thing that says "every general election" or "every four years"?

DR. PLAIN: Yeah, I think that's where the Legislature has to, you know, in terms of deciding if something happened and by the end of the year that no one would want to be going back, and the power is in the Act for the Legislature or the . . .

MR. DAY: So you would suggest some provision for that?

DR. PLAIN: Yes, that would make good sense to me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Others?

Thanks very much.

DR. PLAIN: Thank you for the opportunity.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could have our final three presenters for this morning: Joan Majeski; Rae Shwetz, mayor of Thorhild; Jean De Champlain.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Joan.

MS MAJESKI: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Joan Majeski. I'm here representing the constituency associations of Edmonton-Jasper Place and Edmonton-Meadowlark for the Progressive Conservative Party. We'd like to especially thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the select committee today for the opportunity to address and provide to this group of people our comments on the question of redistribution. We should make clear at the outset that while we represent the many members of our respective political organizations, we speak also as concerned citizens, many of whom were directly affected by the last redistribution of electoral boundaries. We believe that our knowledge of our own constituency associations and areas makes our comments valuable, and we ask that you consider them.

We'd like to comment on what we see to be the three alternatives available to this committee. The first is to allow the status quo to stand; the second is to redistribute existing boundaries, leaving the number the same across the province; and the last is to increase the number of constituencies. We present these comments with specific reference to our situations in our own constituency.

We'd like to comment first on the status quo. We believe that the existing distribution of electoral boundaries has to date been functional and successful. We believe that there has existed an overall level of equity between rural and urban ridings based

simply on the number and type of each riding. We believe that any increase in rural riding size to accommodate the leveling of population will negatively affect the ability of members of the Legislature to fully discharge their duties within their own constituencies. We believe, as do the majority of Albertans, in the concept of less government, and therefore resist the idea of adding a number of constituencies within the province. We are opposed, generally, to the disruption of people and communities resulting from the termination or revision of relationships between people and government.

I'd like to interrupt my presentation for a moment to comment on the thought or prospect of changing boundaries after each provincial election. I think that the members of the public would find that really disrupting.

Regardless of the positive aspects of the option of the status quo, we must, however, be cognizant of legal issues which have arisen in British Columbia as well as the philosophical question of proportional representation. We think, cautiously, that it would be unwise to maintain the status quo, but we accept the concept of maintaining a balance but narrowing that gap that exists between rural and urban riding populations, and we believe that the time to implement that change is now.

With respect to the issue or the alternative of redistribution, this second alternative would be to redistribute the ridings without an increase in their numbers by relocating existing electoral boundaries in such a manner that the resulting populations would fall within the criteria which have been established by the McLachlin decision. Obviously, given the geographic nature of our province, it is necessary to keep the range below or above that 25 percent factor. We believe that the 25 percent factor is a reasonable approach. This alternative satisfies our concerns relative to proportional representation by keeping the split between rural and urban ridings relatively equal and by conforming to a standardized criterion in terms of minimum and maximum population ranges. It also satisfies desires by avoiding adding constituency ridings. This will, however, result in an increase in the size of rural ridings to bring the smaller ones into line relative to the minimum allowable size. We are very concerned that the quality of representation in rural ridings will suffer purely for logistical reasons.

If we looked at the thought of redistribution as it relates to Edmonton west – and I talk specifically about the constituencies of Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-Kingsway, Edmonton-Jasper Place, and Edmonton-Meadowlark – we have a combined voter number in excess of 87,000. If that is simply redistributed, it would be leaving each constituency with the number of 22,000, which is within 5 percent already of the 25 percent range. In growing ridings such as Edmonton-Jasper Place and Edmonton-Meadowlark this would result in obsolescence of redistribution within a couple of years. This prospect we find unacceptable. Any revision today must consider the potential of growth in each riding, with a view to ensuring that any redistribution undertaken will not become outdated in the short term. The disruption of neighbourhoods and people we believe should be eliminated to the extent that it can be.

Based on our comments with respect to the status quo and pure redistribution, the only alternative we see left – and we approach it, again, cautiously – is to increase the number of urban ridings. In dealing specifically with the constituencies, again, of Edmonton-Jasper Place and Edmonton-Meadowlark, those two constituencies have a combined voter population in excess of or approximately 52,000. That is the third highest of sister constituencies having those combined numbers in the

province. We believe that in order to allow for the prospect of future growth in both of our ridings, we would like to see the sizes reduced to about 18,000. We see the city of Edmonton expanding dramatically to the south and the west, which touches both of our constituencies. We have a suggestion we will be presenting to the commission with respect to the relocation and the addition of a third constituency within Edmonton-Meadowlark and Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Once again we would like to thank the committee for allowing us to submit our hearings today and particularly for reconvening the hearings in Edmonton and giving us an opportunity to speak. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Joan.

Questions or comments? Anyone else? Okay. Thank you.

MR. SHWETZ: Mr. Chairman, members of the panel, ladies and gentlemen, I'm speaking from a rural standpoint. From our view, redistribution of electoral boundaries based on population only would have a negative impact on Alberta but particularly so on rural Alberta. We feel that not only population but size, area, resources, municipal and school districts, and distances between communities should be considered if we are to have the best representation of electorate by Members of the Legislative Assembly. Quality of representation should be given strong consideration, not only representation by population.

Here I'd like to use an example of, say, our own particular constituency. Our MLA of the Redwater-Andrew constituency has 11 municipalities, three school districts, four hospital boards, numerous community and cultural associations to communicate with in an area of about 2,000 square miles. Again, there are other areas in the north that I'm sure have far more than the 2,000 square miles, and some of you can probably relate to that. All right. On the other hand, we look at Edmonton, which has 17 MLAs to deal with one municipality, two school boards, an area of approximately 100 square miles. Rural MLAs have primary industries such as agriculture, oil, gas, forestry, mining, tourism, and so forth to represent, which keep centres such as Calgary and Edmonton vibrant. These are your basic industries of Alberta. Rural MLAs must cover large distances to represent their constituents and deal also with the basic industries. Government offices are centred in Edmonton, in which electorates have not only their 17 MLAs to turn to but government services at their fingertips, whereas rural constituents because of distance usually rely on their MLAs for information and help.

All of a sudden we find that this sacred number of plus or minus 25 comes into play. I think the deviation can be more than this plus or minus 25 percent variance. It may be satisfactory to British Columbia, but is it satisfactory to Alberta? Let's look at that. For example, Prince Edward Island has four MPs – that is on the federal level – with a population of about 100,000. Nova Scotia uses plus or minus 33 variance; Saskatchewan for northern constituencies uses 50 percent plus or minus variance. In our opinion, Edmonton and Calgary should have approximately 20 electoral divisions, making them equal partners. Then they don't have to fight back and forth. They're equal. The rest of the constituencies should remain the same. That would give 47 urban constituencies and 41 rural; the majority would be urban. I suppose right now your question would be: how much of a majority do the urban centres want? I mean, that has been the division for some reason or other: urban and rural. Well, right now this means you would have the majority. The next question is: how big a majority would the

urban centres want?

Thanks a lot.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any questions?

MR. SIGURDSON: Just one. Mr. Chairman, I'll ask my perennial question. We've got increasing urbanization and regrettably we've got rural depopulation, and you're arguing for the status quo and pretty much equal representation between rural and urban. I'm wondering, if we have the same trends continuing, if you would at any point see changing the ratio between urban and rural representation in the Legislature.

MR. SHWETZ: Well, right now for some reason, as I mentioned, somebody made the division: rural and urban, half and half. The trend of thought is that the majority should be urban. I agree with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rae, possibly I could help clarify. There's been a gradual shift towards a greater role for the urban centres through their representation. In 1975 we had 75 seats in the Legislature, all right? Today we have 83. The growth in the number of seats has occurred in the urban areas. So there's been a gradual shift, but it was based on the old premise of seven urban voters equaling four rural voters. Even with that the figure of 42 urban and 41 rural isn't something that was etched in stone since 1905. Those just happen to be the numbers used by the last redistribution commission, as prescribed in the legislation by the Assembly. So we've been taking the easy way out, some would say, by adding seats to the Assembly. In that same period of time we've seen one rural seat disappear. Okay?

MR. SIGURDSON: With a declining rural population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, rather than a declining rural population, an increased percentage living in the urban centres.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

Therefore, I'm wondering if you would ever see a change in the ratio of urban to rural seats. If we still continue to have rural depopulation based on today's trends, would you think at any point we might increase the number of urban seats and decrease the number of rural seats?

MR. SHWETZ: I think someplace along the way, with the economists, mathematicians, and so forth, some type of formula should be considered. You should consider the amount of responsibility, the number of municipalities a rural MLA has to contend with in relationship to the urban MLA; some type of formula should be established. I'm sure it could be done. The other thing: I can't see why we have, all right, Westlock-Sturgeon in one block. Does it necessarily have to be in one block? Can the representative, say, from Westlock-Sturgeon represent a block here and maybe one over in the other section? Does it have to be one solid block that a constituency's made up of? That's another thing I'd be looking at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

MR. SIGURDSON: That's fine, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much, Rae. Jean.

MR. DE CHAMPLAIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the select committee. We thank you for the opportunity to speak on the very important issue of electoral boundaries. I speak on behalf of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, an organization that represents 30 counties and 22 municipal districts. These 52 rural municipalities contain approximately two-thirds of the province's rural population and one-third of Alberta's land area. Thus our association has an obvious interest in ensuring that rural citizens are adequately represented in the province's Legislative Assembly.

It is with great concern that we have listened in recent weeks as politicians and public figures from urban Alberta have utilized the latest population figures to push for increased control of the Legislature at the expense of rural citizens. Our association strongly objects to this line of thinking. Obviously, population is a very important factor in determining electoral boundaries and must be taken into account in this committee's deliberation. We do not dispute this. However, we do dispute the notion that population is the only factor to be considered. Other factors, such as geography, economic activity, and the democratic tradition of protecting minority rights must also be taken into account.

By now I am sure you are all aware of the difficulties already faced by rural MLAs under the current system. Nonetheless, I would just like to briefly reiterate some of these obstacles. Most urban MLAs can walk across their constituencies in less time than it takes rural MLAs to drive across theirs. This makes it enormously difficult for a rural MLA to stay in contact with the citizens who have elected him and whom he is supposed to represent. Oftentimes constituents face an hour's drive just to get to the constituency office of their MLA. Rural MLAs must also juggle much more diverse, competing interests. They must stay in tune with and attempt to meet the interests of two or three municipal or county councils, several town and village councils, several school boards, hospital boards, health units, et cetera. Meanwhile, an urban MLA normally faces only one of each of these bodies, and in the cases of Edmonton and Calgary there are 17 or 18 MLAs to deal with the concerns of one municipal government, one health unit, and two school boards.

Despite the strain placed on rural MLAs by having to represent such diverse interests and institutions, by and large rural Albertans have been very well represented in the Legislative Assembly. We are grateful for the long hours and hard work performed on our behalf by these dedicated individuals, but we do not believe that they can take on much more of a burden. Yet this is precisely what would happen if a strict representation by population scheme were to be adopted. In order to meet the target population, many rural ridings would have to be enlarged by a third or a half again, making them virtually impossible to represent effectively. This might satisfy the theoretical requirements of the representation by population philosophy, but it would also result in a practical nightmare for those unfortunates who were given the task of representing those constituencies and the citizens who would no longer have access to a meaningful voice in the Legislature.

Clearly, then, rural constituencies cannot be amalgamated and increased in size in order to meet some new target population. To do so would not only decrease the quantity of rural representation in the Legislature but also the quality of that representation. Through no fault of their own, rural MLAs would be

sentenced to stormy and difficult one-term political careers, trying in vain to represent a population they can never get to know. Meanwhile, again through no fault of their own, rural citizens would suffer from lack of access to their MLA, whose office could be more than 100 kilometres away, and whose voice would be of little importance in a Legislature dominated by MLAs from the province's two major urban centres.

Some individuals have suggested that the current number of rural seats could be retained if eight to 10 new seats were granted to both Edmonton and Calgary. Yes, this would avoid the problems caused by enlarging rural constituencies but nonetheless would have very serious negative effects on rural Alberta. Giving 18 more seats to Edmonton and Calgary would concentrate over 50 percent of the seats in the Legislature in the hands of the two cities.

Urban citizens have a much greater commonality of interests due to their physical proximity to each other than do rural citizens. Issues surrounding access to services and the types of services to be available all have a similar impact on urban voters, whereas rural voters in the same constituency yet separated by 100 kilometres could face entirely different levels of service and access to that service. To concentrate political power in the cities would ignore the needs of these rural citizens to voice their concerns and express their needs at the provincial level.

Such an outcome would also ignore the vital contribution that rural Alberta continues to make to the province's economic well-being. Despite difficult times in recent years, the agricultural sector remains a key element of the economy. Indeed, even the mighty city of Edmonton relies directly and indirectly on agriculture for a significant portion of its economic activity. The province also remains heavily reliant on oil and gas royalties, which have traditionally provided about 40 percent of provincial budgetary revenues. As with agriculture, the vast majority of oil and gas activity takes place in rural areas.

Clearly, rural Alberta makes a major contribution to the provincial economy. Indeed, on a per capita basis the revenue generated from rural areas is probably disproportionately large. Given this contribution, rural citizens have a right to a voice when decisions are taken on how that contribution will be handled by the province. We have a right to a voice that will not be trampled and drowned out by the sheer force of numbers of the urban electorate. The citizens and politicians of Alberta have long argued that the rights and interests of the minority must be protected from the tyranny of the majority. As a province we have argued that in the interests of fairness and equity, the less populated regions of the country must be as proportionately represented in the halls of government. As a province we have argued that these regions deserve an equal say in the decisions which will affect them. This is the very basis of the Triple E Senate philosophy, a philosophy endorsed almost universally in this province. Does not rural Alberta merit the same consideration in Edmonton that we as a province crave in Ottawa? How can we insist on fairness on the federal scene if we deny it in our own backyard?

On behalf of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, our 52 member municipalities, and indeed on behalf of all rural Albertans, I urge you to consider these facts as you review Alberta's electoral boundaries. The present boundaries have served Albertans well. The present boundaries have provided a sound and reasonable balance between urban and rural interests and have ensured all Albertans a voice in the activities of the provincial government. To redesign the system, to adopt a stricter representation by population scheme, would

be to deprive rural Albertans of their voice in provincial affairs and would make a mockery of Alberta's case for Senate reform.

I thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express our concerns to you here today.

Mr. Chairman, I have the copies of our position paper, which I will leave with you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Jean.

Questions, by committee members first? Anyone else? Okay, thank you.

Now, summation. That's the last of our presenters?

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any summation by members? Stock.

MR. DAY: I'd just like to thank all the presenters for the time they've spent. The input is valuable. I think what we've seen here today is a snapshot of what we've seen around the province. There are varying specifics, but it really is a snapshot of the dilemma we face. We appreciate the input you've given to help us resolve the dilemma.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I, too, want to thank you for the presentations. I hope that whatever we come up with and whatever guidelines we give to the commission will be able to meet the approval of Albertans and, if not, then withstand a Charter challenge, because I believe that the one effort we do want to try and avoid is going before the courts to have them tell us what our boundaries must be as opposed to what they might be.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom.

Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I really don't have too many comments, other than I commend the time you spent in regards to addressing issues about rural Alberta. As a rural MLA I really respect people that do that. I would hope again, as a politician elected democratically in this province, that we don't have to have the courts determine how our country is going to be run in the future.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks. I will attempt to summarize the key points each presenter gave and read that into the record.

We began with a recommendation that St. Albert be divided into two urban ridings, and the presenter, the mayor of the city, suggested the urban growth and demands warranted the same. The same presenter suggested that we might look at a 20 percent variation rather than 25 percent, as has been previously suggested.

The next presenter stressed equality of the regions in our province, suggested that there should be a Legislative Assembly composed of 84 members. Half, or 42, would be chosen from the cities within the province and the remaining half from the balance of the province. They went on to suggest that there be a 10 percent variation in the city ridings and a 25 percent tolerance factor in the remaining portion of the province. The same presenter suggested that our committee should recommend

to the Legislative Assembly some plan by which future Senate elections could be done on a regional basis and went on to suggest that you could divide the province into six regions fairly easily.

The next presenter spent some time talking about the McLachlin decision, really begging the question of why that ruling had not been appealed and suggesting that there is more scope than some people have suggested within the existing ruling. Geographic and regional concerns and fairness were also points presented at that time. We went on to hear – in fact, this point was made by several individuals and it's been a recurring theme; it started, I think, when we were in Grande Prairie – that when the commission is struck, the commission should go out and hold hearings prior to preparing an interim report. The standard process followed by a commission here and, I believe, commissions across the country I've been to is to sit down, prepare an interim report, make that report public, then receive input from the public and go back and possibly make adjustments before submitting a final report to the legislative body which created the commission. The suggestion has been made many, many times, and even though our committee has not sat down to address the issue, based on comments made by various committee members at our hearings, I think there's a consensus developing that indeed that's a good idea: the commission should go out and listen first before preparing an interim report. Once the interim report is prepared, go back and listen again. That, again, was brought out by at least two presenters today.

We then heard that the mix in our Alberta Legislature should be 40 urban, 10 urban/rural, and 33 rural and that we could indeed develop a system that would see an average used for each of those categories. It was a fairly complex but also comprehensive proposal. A couple of presenters spoke of the commission composition, the makeup of the commission, and I'll deal with that in a couple of moments. We then heard that based on the premise that we not take away from rural Alberta and yet achieve an objective of a city council, you follow the formula as presented: that the number of seats in the Legislature should increase from 83 to 101, with the new seats going to the urban areas.

We then heard that the committee should remove regional disparities. Northern Alberta and west-central Alberta were used as examples versus east-central and southern Alberta. That was looking solely at the question of the rural area. Most of the discussion to this point in time was focused on the split between urban Alberta and rural Alberta. This presenter suggested you take a look at the rural area and look at where there are disparities in that sense.

Again, the commission makeup: suggesting that it be a five-member commission chaired by a judge, having the Chief Electoral Officer, and three citizens selected, so there's consultation by the leader of the government with the Leader of the Official Opposition party and, of course, the Speaker of the Assembly. We then had some specific changes recommended regarding the St. Albert constituency and Westlock-Sturgeon.

A recurring theme by many presenters is that we should not try to solve the problem by increasing the total number of MLAs in the Assembly. Now, there are exceptions to that, and we heard one today, but many presenters have said, "Don't increase the size of the Assembly." A couple have put a qualifier on and said, "Well, if you need to go up by one or two, maybe, but don't try to solve the problem in that particular way." An MLA's workload was raised as a major factor. Again, a recurring theme is that the government should continue its policy of decentralizing, using that as one way to try to spread some of the jobs and

the economic activity across the province.

Again, maintain or reduce the number of electoral divisions. Support for the plus/minus 25 percent concept was pointed out, and the suggestion that that in itself gives a possible differential of 67 percent if you're going from the upper ends of both the plus 25 percent to the minus 25 percent. A new commission after each election: that suggestion has been made on other occasions. I might point out that Alberta is one of a few jurisdictions that now requires a redistribution after every two general elections. Many still are on the old 10-year model, although many are moving. Saskatchewan has recently moved from 10 years to every second election. I think it's been suggested before by one or two presenters that we look at a redistribution after each election.

Then we heard that the existing system is working, that we not increase the size of rural ridings. The quality of representation must not suffer. Then we heard that we cannot maintain the status quo, that we should be working to narrow the gap between the disparities that exist at the present time. Equality of representation is a theme that has been recurring in our meetings. Geography, economic activity, and distance must also be part of the factor used in whatever formula is developed. You can't look at population and rep by pop as the sole factor. Finally, that we not concentrate political power in our two major cities within the province.

I might share with you the process we are following. You saw in the slides at the beginning of today's meeting that to this point in time we've heard over 200 presentations and another 60- to 70-odd have been mailed in, and we're not yet finished with that part of the process. We are keeping a record of all the briefs, not only on tape as required through *Hansard* but also on our floppy disks, so we can pull out not only the key points made by the various presenters but also recurring themes. That's important. When we are sitting down trying to develop a consensus in an area, we can see where points were made, how they were made, and try to get that blending which is so necessary in this kind of activity.

I want to conclude by thanking those of you who are left and thanking those who have come out today to make briefs and have since departed. This is a very important part of the process as we as a committee see it. We know how mammoth the task before us is. We've been asked the question on a couple of occasions: does the hearing process really count? Are you listening? I respond on behalf of the committee by saying yes, absolutely. At each and every meeting we've heard at least one new concept, one new thought or idea. That doesn't mean we're going to be able to build them all into the final report, but you're challenging us, you're stimulating us, and that's so important.

The very fact that we're looking at total population, as presented in the slides earlier today, rather than merely elector population will significantly solve the problem with the Cardston constituency, where 1,800 men and women over the age of 18, who are Canadian citizens and are certainly eligible to vote, have chosen not to be enumerated. Therefore, the total numbers for that constituency have significantly been brought down.

So we are looking at every possible means to ensure that before we do develop our conclusions, we've given sufficient opportunity for input from Albertans across the province.

We do thank you for coming out and sharing your thoughts and ideas with us.

[The committee adjourned at 1:09 p.m.]