

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[11:48 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to welcome you to the reconvened meeting of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries being held here in Hanna. We do apologize for the delay in beginning. As you know, the fog has caused problems for people traveling and caused members of the committee to change travel plans. They were originally planning to fly in from Calgary, where a meeting occurred this morning at 8 o'clock, and have since driven out. I've just been advised by Stockwell Day, who has been working with the mayor of Wainwright – and I'm not sure if he did get through to Butch Fischer in the end, the MLA for the area – and we've reluctantly postponed the meeting which was scheduled for Wainwright.

I'm going to introduce the members of the committee who are here today. We're going to skip the overhead slide presentation. I think almost all of you were here when we were last in Hanna and did see that. If there are any questions, you know you're more than welcome to add in once a report has been made and committee members have been given an opportunity to respond.

But I would like to begin by introducing the members of the committee who are here today. Tom Sigurdson from Edmonton-Belmont, a New Democratic member of the committee. As you'll recall, Tom served as an executive assistant to Grant Notley, and Mr. Notley sat on a previous redistribution commission. So Tom does have some background in the role of the commission's work. Frank Bruseker. Frank is a Liberal member of the Assembly, and he represents the constituency of Calgary-North West. To my right, Stockwell Day. Stock is the MLA for Red Deer-North. He's also the Whip of the governing caucus. My name is Bob Bogle, and I represent Taber-Warner.

Bob, have we got the first presenters ready? We'll get right into the briefs.

MR. PRITCHARD: I'd ask the first two to come up: Frank Wesseling and Brian Anderson.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank's got his from our last meeting.

MR. PRITCHARD: Do you? Okay, great. That's terrific. We'll just put yours up there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Frank, we'll begin with you.

MR. WESSELING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm here on behalf of the Palliser Regional Planning Commission, which is based here in Hanna. Before I get into the presentation, I'd just like to introduce the chairman of the Palliser Regional Planning Commission, Mr. Jim Andrew.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, ladies and gentlemen, you heard at the last hearing in Hanna from four municipalities that are members of the Palliser Regional Planning Commission: the MD of Starland, Acadia, town of Hanna, and also the special areas. The Palliser Regional Planning Commission supports and endorses the presentations that were made to you at that time.

The Palliser Regional Planning Commission as a whole has considered the implications of the current electoral boundary review. The Palliser Regional Planning Commission wishes to go on record as being opposed to any boundary changes to the constituencies in this area. As a planning agency for 25 municipalities, reaching from the Saskatchewan border to the Acme-

Linden area in the west and from the Neutral Hills in the north to the Empress area in the south, we feel it would be beneficial to outline to you a number of issues and trends that are important to this region and are reflected in our view of opposing a change.

It is imperative, we feel, for the continued prosperity of this region that the local MLAs assist the residents, municipalities, and agencies with these matters in order that the most effective and efficient government support and assistance can be provided. These issues and trends are as follows. First of all, in a demographic area the Palliser region has experienced a persistent decline of rural population and has shown slow growth of urban communities. The region's low population level and aging population will impact on social services programs and facilities, housing, recreational activities, and labour force requirements. We wish to point out, however, that the continual decline of this regional population, which started in the 1920s, has stabilized in the mid-1970s. Since that time the population of this region has undergone a slow increase. We have some information that will provide you with that. Our projections indicate that this regional trend of a slow increase in population will continue.

The other issues that the citizens and the local MLAs have to be concerned about are the municipal needs and concerns. Like the larger urban municipalities, the municipalities in this region also face an aging municipal infrastructure and services which will require upgrading and/or replacement. There's increased competition between municipalities for economic expansion and continued competitive disadvantages for most Palliser municipalities in terms of transportation, market size, density, and labour force as compared to the municipalities along the Lethbridge to Edmonton corridor.

Some economic factors. There's the potential future instability of agricultural market conditions which reflects on rural population, farm size, and the family farm unit; the impact of free trade. Also, there are a number of developments occurring in this region that are impacting favourably on this region. These are the establishment of the Henry Kroeger Regional Water Commission, the tourist expansion in the Drumheller valley, the Hanna area with the Prairie Oasis park, Trochu with the Arboretum, the new golf course in Oyen, the reaching of the operational capacity of the Sheerness power plant, the potential irrigation of vast tracts of land within the special areas, and just recently, the tire recycling plant potential in Trochu.

In terms of the physical environment the possible climatic changes due to the greenhouse effect may result in increased incidence of drought and a change in temperature and precipitation in this area. Inadequate rural water supply and chronic water quality problems in the eastern Palliser region have been associated with the region's declining rural population, limited potential for increased agricultural production, and an inability for the region to draw and support industry. Water issues with future implications include estimated future water demand, rural water supply and quality, irrigation expansion, and apportionment of the Red Deer River water within the South Saskatchewan River basin. Conservation of native prairie is a growing concern in this area. The prairie conservation action plan identifies that only 10 percent of native prairie remains in western Canada. Approximately 50 percent of that is located in this region.

For generations area residents have felt forgotten and alienated by the remainder of the province. They have always been forced to cope with a lack of programs and facilities. The residents depend heavily on an accessible MLA to ensure that

their concerns are brought to the attention of government. That accessibility would be jeopardized by a change in constituency boundaries, especially now when trends seem to indicate a stable regional economy and a potential for growth.

A rural MLA in the Palliser region works with a large number of municipalities, school boards, health units, hospitals, private interest groups, et cetera. The enlargement of rural constituencies would make this task nearly impossible and would place an enormous burden on the MLA.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the member municipalities of the Palliser Regional Planning Commission have tried to illustrate that this region has its special significance to the rest of the province. This significance is enhanced by the fact that trends of economic growth are noted; in particular, in terms of the tourism industry. A change in rural constituency boundaries would severely curtail the abilities of the MLA to adequately meet the needs and desires of the constituencies in Edmonton and seriously impact on the quality of representation. The Palliser Regional Planning Commission respectfully requests that the committee maintain the existing distribution of electoral divisions allowing lesser populated areas disproportionate representation, thereby ensuring the protection of the local interests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Frank.

Any questions from the committee? Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Frank. You talk about the rural population decline stabilizing and increasing. Do you have, just to give us an idea, some percentage figures, say, of the last 10 or 15 years?

MR. WESSELING: In the written material that I'll provide you, there is a chart which outlines the population by numbers. It shows the decline from the 1920s and the change occurring in the mid-70s, when the population actually started to rise.

MR. DAY: We hear a lot about decline in rural population, so these figures are interesting. In fact, from people who report on trends as we move into the 21st century, they talk very clearly in North America about a reversal of this rural decline, about people moving from the cities out to the rural areas mainly for quality-of-life reasons. So it's interesting to see that you've charted that as happening here, and you've got those numbers provided.

You talk about a sense of alienation should the boundaries increase, and there'd be a sense that the rural population is losing representation. Do you feel there's a sense of alienation now in, let's say, this rural area in terms of representation because of larger numbers of city MLAs? Is there a rural concern now in terms of alienation?

MR. WESSELING: I think so. I think that came out at the first hearing. Also, previous to this hearing starting, we had a small sort of town hall meeting where that sort of feeling came out, that there was a lot happening in the western part of the province, a lot of money was being spent in the western part of the province but not in this area. I think what we're trying to show in this presentation is that things are starting to happen here, and this area needs an accessible MLA to be able to continue these things. If the areas are made so much larger for the rural MLAs, that's going to make it much more difficult for

us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Anyone else? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just recently we had a presentation from the city of Edmonton, and they had proposed two things. One is that there be an increase in the number of urban constituencies at the expense of rural constituencies. The second thing they proposed was that in order to maintain the same geographical size of rural constituencies, we increase the number of members of the Legislature. I'm wondering if you would like to comment on that.

MR. WESSELING: Well, that's kind of a difficult question to answer for me, I think. In terms of increasing the number of seats, I think it was discussed at length at the last hearing. I think what we're saying is that by increasing the size of the areas in this area, it's going to make it so much harder for our MLAs to provide the same type of representation that the urban MLAs can give their people. I think that's sort of the direction we're coming from.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Frank.

Anyone else?

Brian. Brian has traveled a long way from home to be with us.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Brian Anderson. I'm vice-president of the Alberta sugar beet growers. I apologize for taking the time of this district in their hearings, but at the time the hearing was held in Lethbridge, we had not yet had our annual meeting, and therefore we couldn't form a complete policy statement.

Mr. Chairman, hon. minister, hon. committee members, and ladies and gentlemen, in a recent television interview Harvey Kirk of *CTV News* said that the world history of the last year could be summed up in just two words, glasnost and perestroika. It appears that wherever we go and whatever we do, change is all about us. Somehow we must deal with that change and direct it toward positive results. We, too, in Alberta must ask ourselves: what can happen here?

I'm happy to be here today. I'm representing 600 sugar beet producers of southern Alberta. The sugar beet growing area is scattered throughout four rural constituencies. Much concern has been aroused within the beet growers of southern Alberta pursuant to the study of electoral boundaries initiated by the Legislative Assembly in Alberta in August of 1989.

The issues affecting electoral boundary legislation were discussed openly at five local sugar beet producers meetings held the first two weeks of January. As a result of these meetings, a resolution was put forth to the 65th annual convention held on February 14, 1990. The resolution reads as follows:

Inasmuch as the provincial government is studying the realignment of constituency boundaries because of a decrease of rural population which will mean a loss of rural representation which will increase the number of MLA's in the cities of Alberta.

Be it resolved that we as farmers make our concerns known that we want the number of MLA's retained in rural Alberta. We can do this individually and collectively, by sending a brief from the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Marketing Board requesting that Rural representation be given not so much on population but rather by area.

Some of you may think that this resolution is somewhat

narrow, considering how some define democracy. The most famous and most simple definition of democracy was made by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address when he defined it as "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." However, Mr. Lincoln was referring to a government that had a built-in system of checks and balances.

It was stated, further to Mr. Lincoln's remarks, that since God created man with certain unalienable rights, and man in turn created government to help secure and safeguard those rights, it follows that man is superior to the creature he created. Through the U.S. Constitution the Americans were determined that there should be no concentration of power in national government, nor did they wish to give too much power to the people, for they feared government by the mob as much as by central government. Thus they separated the powers of government and created a system of checks and balances.

Looking for a solution to the electoral boundaries, care must be taken that we don't create a disparity between urban and rural voters and thus cause a perpetual lack of unity. Instead, we must forge a new positive method of balancing rural and urban representation for the benefit of all Albertans. We have enough negative experience with an east versus west battle on the federal level to let the same type of problem develop provincially. When considering the shifting population pattern that has occurred, we see some inequities. These inequities could be considered symptoms of the problem rather than the problem itself. The problem is rural depopulation caused by the destruction of the agricultural economy. This has been brought about through international trade wars which have occurred through government intervention in agricultural production and trade on the international scene. Further destruction of the agricultural economy has been caused by the central Canadian government's agrifood policies that have been directed towards large population bases, whereby governments have been concerned far more about the next election than the next generation.

Winston Churchill once said that the farther we can see back, the farther we can see ahead. As we look back over the past two decades of federal governments, we see some shocking results. As a people we became greedy and demanded more and more out of government. Simply put, consumption exceeded production and thus led to a string of deficit budgets. A deficit budget thus becomes a hidden tax on the people of the country. In so doing, our government instituted a cheap-food policy in order to satisfy the masses of population. This led to the destruction of regional economies. We were a prosperous nation; we believed that our future was secure. We were blind to the fact that history has proven that nations usually sow seeds of destruction during times of prolonged prosperity. Now today we live in a country with an accumulated deficit of \$350 billion. It now takes 35 cents out of every revenue dollar to pay the interest on the national debt. It has been said that those who understand interest, earn it, and those who don't, pay it. Over the same period of time our Senate, which was supposed to represent regional concerns, has become largely ineffective. In recent years the provincial Premiers have had to become involved in order to draw attention to the regional concerns. We must not let the same situation arise provincially. We must maintain a balanced economy.

The beet growers feel that far too much emphasis is being placed on the B.C. court decision concluding that a 25 percent variance of registered voters within a constituency would fit within the Charter of Rights. Other formulas may also be

compatible with the Charter. In Alberta we must have a wider vision. Any future political electoral boundary changes must address both geography as well as demographics so that we can strike a balance in representation and still adhere to a strong provincial economy. Our regional differences within Alberta as well as our provincial potentialities must be recognized. If this can be struck, then all areas in the province can have equal, elected, and effective representation and still fit within the Charter of Rights.

It is the beet growers' wish that the provincial government work towards an electoral boundary policy that would give all Albertans reasonably equal access to an MLA and thus to the government of the province. If this is to be accomplished, a formula would have to be developed that would give consideration to population density, distance from the capital, geography of the constituency, and the number of local governments, school boards, hospital boards, et cetera, that an MLA would represent. We recommend the establishment of electoral boundaries through the use of an adjusted population base value. In this formula $X + Y$ would become the constituency population value. X would be the number of people that lived within the electoral boundaries. Y would be the total of $A + B + C$, or the total population adjustment after the necessary population factors have been calculated. A would be equal to the population adjustment factor to take into account the constituency's distance from the capital. B would be equal to the population adjustment factor to take into account the number of square kilometres within the constituency. C would be equal to the population adjustment factor to take into account the number of governing bodies that an MLA would represent. This should be done in such a way as to maintain the balance between rural and urban constituencies and maintain a strong provincial economy.

A complementary recommendation would be to decentralize more of the civil service to rural communities and thus help to bolster the population and economy of rural Alberta. Further to this, the provincial government must continue to press the federal government to implement strong agricultural policies that would be responsive to our regional needs. These policies must be geared to promote value-added industries. No real Canadian farmer wants to be subsidized. The government of the land does not owe the farmers a living. However, they do owe the agricultural community solid agricultural policy based on a level playing field. Then we should take on an education program for our elected representatives so that all Members of the Legislative Assembly can gain a better understanding of our total provincial needs and thus promote unity within our province.

It can happen here. We as Albertans can develop our electoral boundaries in such a way as this, that our province can have a true democracy with a built-in set of checks and balances. We can have equal, effective, and elected representation. We can have a balanced economy.

Shakespeare said:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.

On such a full sea we are now afloat. We must take the current when it serves us or lose our ventures. We must not miss the opportunity that is before us. As change seems to be all around us, we must take it in our stride and become directors of change instead of its victim.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Brian.

Any questions from the committee members?

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you very much for the presentation. We chatted, I think, in Lethbridge for a short while, Brian.

You've heard me ask the question in Lethbridge, that we've had, as you point out and as we've had many presenters point out, a decline in the rural population, which is an increase in the urban population. I've used the figure 60-40 that nobody seemed to argue with. I don't know which body recently came out with a figure that said that Alberta is the second most urbanized province in the country, second only to Ontario. You argue for maintaining the ratio as it currently exists: 41 rural constituencies, 42 urban constituencies. I wonder if there's a point where you would change the ratio with respect to urban/rural split.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, I think you heard the resolution that was put forth before the beet growers. I'm here representing them, and their position was very firm. I've tried to put together the data that I agree with which supports that we have to have a balanced economy. Therefore, we have to maintain this balance in rural and urban in order to maintain a balanced economy for our province.

MR. SIGURDSON: So at no point.

MR. ANDERSON: No; the point that we're at right now is the point. It's solidly given in the resolution that we have.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stock.

MR. DAY: A couple of questions. Thanks for the presentation, Brian. You mentioned your annual meeting. When this committee was in Lethbridge, you hadn't had the annual meeting, and therefore there was a time factor. Are you aware of other boards or groups who have been caught in that same time crunch?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. I know the Alberta vegetable growers were in the same type of a crunch. I don't know what they've done recently. We just looked into the position of possibly submitting our brief, and then when I heard that this hearing was taking place, I phoned and asked for permission to come and was given such. I appreciate that opportunity.

MR. DAY: Your formula is interesting. We always hit new ideas as we have these meetings, even when we come back a second time to the same place. So in one way we're always looking forward to new ideas; on the other hand, we're saying thanks a lot, because this is more to try and sort out now.

But in the formula you've got A, a population adjustment factor to take in distance from the capital. Would you be or do you think your group would be willing to amend that a bit? I'm not talking about a formal amendment, but to look at some elasticity there. I'm thinking of this: if you've got an MLA in Calgary - let's say roughly 200 miles from Edmonton - if he lived near the airport, he's 45 minutes away from the Legislature. If the MLA is from West Yellowhead and lives on the other side of Hinton, he's also 200 miles from Edmonton, but he's five hours away from the Legislature. Would there be a distance/time thing?

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, certainly there could be more put into

it. I was trying to be as specific as I could with all the information I had available.

MR. DAY: Yeah, I appreciate that.

MR. ANDERSON: Now, our group would be willing to sit down and make it more specific provided that we had all the right numbers to work with. We're working in vague things here, but we wanted to show that there was a formula in place that we could develop, that we could work on, that would still fit within the Charter. Something that was brought out in Lethbridge is that everything seemed to be pending on this Charter of Rights, this decision that was made in British Columbia, and if that were the case, then all this exercise is redundant. We didn't believe it is, and we believe there are other things that would fit within the Charter, so we tried to promote something positive that would work, that would be defensible, and still maintain a balanced economy.

MR. DAY: Yeah. We appreciate that, and this idea of a formula - discussion of a formula has come up. I don't know if we've seen an explicit, broken-down one like this, so that's interesting for us.

You quote Churchill here. He's talking about looking back; it means that the farther you look back, the farther you look forward. He also said that the only thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. We hope that we can learn from this here. In line with that, in terms of the history as you see it, your group covers four constituencies, you said?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes.

MR. DAY: We've heard from Frank that the population decline seems to be reversed in the Palliser area covered by that planning commission. Can you speak for the other areas, or do you know offhand what's happening there?

MR. ANDERSON: I don't have any direct statistics that I could quote. It seems to be stabilizing. There's been a big adjustment in the last few years, keeping in mind that we're from an irrigated area, which should indicate really good solvency in that. But these last few years in agriculture, with our high input costs we have no real place where we can cut costs, and it's caused a traumatic amount of failures in agriculture in our area. But I do believe that has stabilized. I think some of our towns in the south have pretty good economies. I think it is a stabilizing thing now, and if we will follow some of the recommendations we've made, we can go the other direction. That's really what needs to happen. The whole point of what I was trying to say is that we have to change that process of rural depopulation. We need the people back in the rural areas.

MR. DAY: Okay. Thanks, Brian.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. Thank you for your presentation, Brian. I really liked your quote from Shakespeare. It basically says that if life hands you lemons, make lemonade.

You're very firm on maintaining the 50-50 split. The question I want to ask you is referring, then, just to the rural areas. Right now, if you compare just the rural constituencies, there are some inequities in terms of population and size and so on. Do

you see an equalization there amongst the rural areas even in terms of equating population? Because once you get into the rural areas, you're going to have all these factors you're talking about influencing, so it should equalize out quite a bit.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, the formula I put forth will have a tendency to equalize rural areas somewhat. Now, keep in mind there still may have to be a variance in there somewhere, as there was in B.C. with the 25 percent variance, and I believe that would still fit within the Charter too. Once you have this population-adjusted factor put in there, then you'll still have to have a variance, because there are some natural constituency boundary divisions. There are some natural things that divide us. I had the opportunity of sitting in the town hall meeting here this morning. I listened carefully to the questions that were asked of the hon. associate minister and Mr. Bogle, and there are concerns that arise here in this area different than what arise in my area. So I think there are some natural boundaries that have to be followed regardless of the formula you put forth, and that's why I believe there'd still have to be a variance, even after the population-adjusted value.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I might, Brian, just looking at your own formula, I see two factors that would certainly favour the retention of a riding like Chinook: your B and C, where you're looking at the number of square kilometres within the constituency and the number of governing bodies the MLA would represent. We've got a riding that's small in terms of population but large in geography and in terms of the number of municipalities within the riding, so that would put Chinook in a unique category, and I think your formula takes that into account.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. I guess the one that was really springing to my mind was, for example, Cardston and Cypress-Redcliff, both in the south end of the province . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Although, as you know, Frank, when we use the total population figures, they come to within about 2,000 to 2,500 votes of falling within the safe category, if you're using the plus/minus 25 percent. So I'm saying that if you use the total . . .

MR. ANDERSON: My numbers are all based on total population, not just registered electors.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. The total population of those ridings is up between 19,000 and 20,000.

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess what I'm still getting at, though, is that there's quite a difference in terms of the geographic area between those two, and I was wondering if you think this formula would equalize those out more.

MR. ANDERSON: I think the formula would go a long way to making it, like I said, equitable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Anyone else on the committee? Anyone else?

Thanks very much, Brian. You've traveled over 220 kilometres to be with us today and have come through fog, and we do appreciate that.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you for the opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: The next two presenters are Gene Kush and John Klobberdanz.

MR. KLOBBERDANZ: Thank you.

MR. PRITCHARD: Have you got copies of your presentation to give out?

MR. KLOBBERDANZ: I'll have one to give you when I'm finished.

MR. PRITCHARD: Okay. That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, John, could we start with you, please. Oh, you were on our list last time.

MR. KLOBBERDANZ: I was on your hit list last time, right.

Okay. I'm probably not as fluent or as knowledgeable as my predecessors in this chair, but I do have a presentation I'd like to give to you.

Mr. Chairman, committee members, guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am before you at this time in hopes to convey my concerns in relation to electoral boundary issues. When first this province was settled, the vast majority of the population was rural. After World War I and certainly after World War II the shift from rural to urban became a torrent. Throughout this period the ties to agricultural roots remained. Most of the people had family members still on the farm. The children of our urban relatives came to the farm for summer holidays, Christmas, et cetera. Today the third generation, removed from their agricultural roots, plus immigration from older settled areas reinforce the statement that they have little or no knowledge of agriculture and no desire or reason to learn as long as breakfast, lunch, and dinner show up at the usual time.

I point out to you people that primary agricultural producers make up 3 to 4 percent of the population yet at the same time feed the remaining 94 percent and have excess production to export, generating foreign earnings plus jobs. Please take note: rural Alberta generates approximately 80 percent of all tax revenue. You don't have feedlots for livestock or grain farms in your cities. Petroleum revenue is also generated in the rural areas of Alberta. Have you ever lived next to a hydrogen sulphide plant? It smells wonderful and cleans your nasal passages. Your dump sites are not in your cities but rather in my backyard.

A federal cheap food policy and a disregard for agriculture forced upon rural Canada causes an ever greater need to expand farm size, resulting in further depopulation of rural Canada. Today those of us living next to growing cities have had our lands expropriated in an ever increasing need for housing. Those decisions are made by authorities comprised of people with little or no knowledge of agriculture and at times less regard for the land that feeds them.

As an agricultural producer, I am aware of your urban problems more than you may think. I see them each time I travel farther and farther to centres ever increasing in size to purchase the goods and services I need to carry on my operations. Reasons? Economy of scale. Our smaller centres cannot survive on revenues generated, because of lack of population. All social services such as hospitals, schools, doctors, dentists cost more on a per capita basis because of lack of people. Our

rural hospitals in Alberta are not much more than glorified first-aid stations. My urban counterpart can receive medical attention in a matter of minutes, rural residents in hours. My children do not have equal access to education. If he or she is not academically inclined, the vocational subjects are unaffordable. Reason? Lack of numbers. Solution: supplementary requisitions and higher taxes.

I would ask members of the committee: what great boon to society will a redistribution of electoral seats bring? Will you be able to reinvent the wheel or walk on water? Will the contemplated changes benefit society as a whole, or will the benefits be confined to only a few? Even in rural ridings much of the population is concentrated in hamlets, villages, and towns. I would appreciate some of your views on the subject.

I will make note that this country has a large land base, two-thirds of which is covered with trees, a small population per square mile, and a shortage of affordable housing. Why? Poor management or a lack of regard for our fellow man strikes me as being front and centre. We that remain in rural ridings have over the years sent you vigorous, robust, talented people with which to populate your urban towns and centres. When are you going to repay our debt?

While admitting some strains in rural Alberta are federally related, they still add up to extra cost to us; i.e., postal service. At the moment I drive five miles to receive my mail, a service which gets me my bills four days a week. Federal cost-saving measures would have my local post office closed, necessitating a sojourn of 22 miles to receive my bill. My urban counterpart gets his or hers delivered to the door for the same 39 cents.

I make mention that my MLA has her office in Hanna, a mere 110 miles from my home. Incidentally, that's the distance I drove to get here today. In order to get here at all, my morning started at 5 a.m. Livestock insist on being fed regardless of my commitments. As well, they are my livelihood. An urban riding resident can in most cases drive to the MLA's office in a matter of 20 minutes or more. From the point of view of a rural MLA - i.e., Chinook - there's a two-or three-hour drive just to get to the riding, never mind driving within her boundaries. A Calgary MLA can hop the airbus, be home in time for supper, meet with constituents, get a good night's sleep, and be back in the House for the morning. A rural MLA: maybe on the weekends.

Something you may or may not be aware of: most rural people either know their MLA personally or at least know of them. I maintain you would receive far less favourable recognition in an urban riding.

A larger riding would spread time and resources of a rural MLA thinner and be even less able to communicate with the constituents and they with them. The voice of agriculture is faint, and further dilution of representation will totally silence that voice. We are becoming an invisible minority. What communications do we have as producers? The daily papers of our largest city? When was the last time agriculture was front and centre in the *Edmonton Journal* or any other major newspaper? Not in recent memory, I'm sure. National newspapers or TV seldom carry in-depth newscasts on agriculture; it doesn't grab the viewers' attention. In fact, Alberta doesn't have a farm paper. Tell me how I, a producer, can make my needs and concerns known to my urban counterparts. The most effective way is in the Legislature, with enough members to be heard by MLAs on all sides, rural and urban.

Think about this: one person, one vote. What has this process done for western Canada or the maritimes? How well are we heard in central Canada? Please remember that there is

one very important four-letter word vital to all of us, and that word is "food." I would like to quote Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1890-1969: Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pen and you're a thousand miles from the cornfield.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, John.

Any questions? Stock.

MR. DAY: John, somebody mentioned earlier that the mayor of Edmonton was suggesting increasing the number of seats in the cities for MLAs. What would your response be to a decision, as an example, from the Electoral Boundaries Commission that the rural ridings will stay the same - so that satisfies your concern about not overworking your MLA - but the city MLA numbers would increase? What would your response be?

MR. KLOBERDANZ: I suppose in the first place I would like to educate the electorate more than anything else. Over the years - and you know, I'm no great philosopher or anything - I've found that in rural ridings we as rural residents tend to be more political, maybe because we are affected more directly by changes. I have relatives, et cetera, that live in rural ridings and most of them don't even know who their MLA is and couldn't care less. Now, I don't know how you'd change that.

MR. DAY: In urban ridings or . . . You said in rural ridings. You have relatives in . . .

MR. KLOBERDANZ: Urban ridings.

I don't know. There's something about them; they aren't interested in the politics of things. Maybe we could educate them some way or other to be more receptive to ideas or take a closer interest in their own immediate surroundings. They don't seem to be.

It would depend, I guess, how many more ridings you would want to put in, because I'm also thinking of cost. You know, we're talking about a point in history when we are strapped for cash, eh? Let's put it that way. I have no real idea how you would do that. But my biggest concern is that out here, because of our size and our distances, our voice isn't heard all that much.

MR. DAY: I think the mayor was suggesting . . . I can't remember exactly, but if you added more seats as she was suggesting the number of seats in the Legislature would be up somewhere over a hundred, as an example. What would your reaction be to that? Cost would be a consideration?

MR. KLOBERDANZ: Cost would be a major factor. I'm wondering if there couldn't be some more efficiencies brought in.

MR. DAY: Just as a side note, there might be some benefits about not being recognized in your riding. For instance, if I were a federal MP right now, I might be glad not to be recognized in a city riding. So there are benefits on both sides. I say that facetiously.

MR. KLOBERDANZ: I made that remark to Shirley this morning too. You know, sometimes being in an urban riding and your constituents not knowing might be an advantage, whereas out here we pretty well know who she is, where she is, and where we can get hold of her.

MR. DAY: Yeah. It's tough for her to hide.
Thanks, John.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? Any other questions?
Thanks, John.
Gene.

MR. KUSH: Good morning, gentlemen. Thank you very much for letting me make my presentation to you. I mailed to each of your residences a copy of my presentation when you were unable to let me speak last time you had your meeting here in Hanna. I'm not going to read from my presentation, for two reasons. One is that I'm sure the Legislative Assembly Act requires of elected members a certain ability to read and write, so I would just be duplicating your efforts. The second is: I want to abandon the second part of my argument that you had there concerning the number of votes a person should have.

Let's look at what is really going on. It's a power struggle. The city of Edmonton mayor wants more members so she can have a bigger hammer in the Legislature. The mayor of the city of Calgary wants more members. The result is that we out here in the country are going to be the ones that are hit. It's pure and simple a power struggle. Now, if you go back in the history of elections, this business of having one man, one vote and one man representing the same number of people as his next-door neighbour in the Legislative Assembly is all a bunch of nonsense. We have never ever had in any democratic country complete representation according to population. It just won't work. Look at the United States. Look at Britain. I think what's happening is that some of us - it's such a bad reaction to the rotten borough problem they had in England many, many years ago. We think we're going to protect the new world from that problem, where they had members representing people that weren't even alive.

I would suggest to this committee that I think the way to resolve this is you've got to have a brand-new look at the whole thing and say: all right, the city of Calgary is mad at the city of Edmonton because they've got more members. Right. Make the two equal; the city of Calgary has as many members as the city of Edmonton. Then let's look at the rest of the province. We've got Lethbridge, we've got Red Deer, and we've got the other rural elements. Let's take and give to the rural people - that is, those people that are outside the cities - an equal vote with the ones that are inside the cities. That's your formula: 50-50. I've no objection to that. But I really do object to giving the people in the cities more authority, because that authority is ultimately going to be used to hurt us. It is not there to help us.

Now, if you accept that argument, then from there on you can take the method of dividing the members among the rural constituency areas based on geography and population and go along that line. But to merely increase members because some mayor wants it, or to be running away from common sense just because some judge who has gone beyond his authority, has no authority to say that 25 percent is okay - 26 percent might be just as good. One of the speakers earlier this morning made the point that there's no magic in what the judge in British Columbia has said, and don't run scared from him. We've got a lot of new, novel ways of getting equal representation, and what worries us in the country is that we're going to be overrun. Particularly out here in the shortgrass country, we hear now that one Member of the Legislative Assembly wants to take away from us our rights to surface rental from grazing leases and give

it to a bunch of hunters and Sunday recreationers, and that's going to come about if we don't have an equal right to say what's going to happen in this province.

Those are all my remarks with respect to a new formula. I'm going to abandon the second arguments. Those were put in there more out of jest to try to liven up what would otherwise have been a very dull meeting. But I do have one other matter, Mr. Chairman. I have a matter that goes to the jurisdiction of one of the members to sit and to rule in this committee. As I understand the committee, it's a select committee. It is not one that goes about to gather evidence and then relay that evidence back to the Legislature. It is a select committee; it's going to make a specific recommendation. Now, I am told that one of the members sitting on this committee, an MLA for Calgary, is quoted in the *Rocky Mountain House Mountaineer*.

Bruseker told the members the Tories like having the larger numbers of rural seats. "Every seat lost" through redistribution, "is one Tory seat lost." If that's the position of that particular member of this committee, that he is going to use politics as a means of getting back into power, then I'm certainly very much of the view that he has gone beyond the authority he has to sit on this committee and should be disqualified from taking part in the final report.

Further, reading from what he is supposed to have said in the paper,

Calgary North West is one of the Province's largest ridings, and Bruseker pointed out the need for redistribution. With 31,000 eligible voters, increasing by 2,000 homes and 6,000 voters since the last redistribution as a result of the addition of new neighbourhoods such as Edgemont and Hawkwood . . .

He then goes on. The heading says, "Liberal MLA predicts loss of six rural seats in redistribution." Well, with due respect, Mr. Chairman, I submit it's an insult to every one of us who have taken the time to come here and put out our views and our thoughts when we pick up the paper and read that somebody has already made up his mind, and that's the way it's going to be.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Gene.

I wonder if we could deal first of all with your formula, Gene.

MR. KUSH: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On page 3.

MR. KUSH: Well, there's some lousy mathematics on page 3.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's what I wanted you to clarify for us.

MR. KUSH: It should be Calgary, 25; Edmonton, 25; semirural, 25; and rural, 25. That is, we break the province up into four areas: rural, semirural, Edmonton, and Calgary. In that way we get a fair balance for everybody in the province and don't get too much weight being given to one area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Gene. One other factor I want to clarify has to do with the committee and the hearings we're currently having and any final conclusions we might draw. I've stated repeatedly as we go about the province and in the hearing process that the seven members who sit on this select committee have not sat down to discuss any final conclusions. We have not violated and, as long as I chair this committee, we will not violate that trust. We're here to hear your views, to receive your

input, to get your advice. We still have a number of communities to visit and input to receive. Until that part of the process has been dealt with, we won't be sitting down as a committee. The matter is serious. I can only say that we're going to deal with the specific article referred to at an emergency special meeting of the committee on Wednesday of this week, and I really would rather not speak about it any further because the matter is coming back for further review.

MR. KUSH: Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Tom. You may have a question for Gene.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah, I do. You talked about political weight, political hammers, and maybe I don't quite visualize redistribution in such a fashion. Currently we've got a problem that's probably only going to happen in an urban centre. I don't know if you're aware - I'm sure you probably are - that we've had incredible rental increases in urban centres. Last week in my office I had a senior citizen come in. She was given notice that in 90 days her rent is going up 33 and one-third percent. Now, that was the first of a flood of calls that came in because we had a land flip in the constituency which allowed the new landlord to increase the rates.

When I get that kind of problem - as I say, it came in a flood. I think it kind of took away from the argument - correct me if I'm wrong; I'm sure you will - that while you've got to travel 110 miles, I had a number of people who had to wait to see me, because while their problem may have been common, they didn't want to speak of it as a matter of poverty or as a matter of economics in front of their neighbours. So while I was trying to dole out my time, other people were waiting. I'm just wondering if you can offer any comments on that.

MR. KUSH: That's part of the territory you're in. You're representing that number of people. I think what Gordon Taylor used to do - he was the master - meeting the public. Almost every weekend there'd be a little ad in the paper telling the people of Drumheller where Gordon Taylor was going to be available, and he solved a lot of problems. And our late Henry Kroeger was here in Hanna every Saturday. He had a similar problem. Originally a lot of people were in and then pretty soon they petered out. Shirley does the same thing, comes down here. I think if you were to just rearrange your time and your schedules and be more available, you wouldn't run into the difficulty of them having to wait. Waiting isn't costing them money. Traveling a couple of hundred miles costs us dollars.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I'm not going to get into debate, Mr. Chairman. I'll save it for committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. KUSH: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: The next two presenters are Barry Walker and Doug Kastelic.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Barry, would you like to lead off, please?

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today I'm representing the Coronation Municipal hospital district No. 39 and Coronation-Pointearth auxiliary hospital and nursing home district No. 16. Prior to proceeding, I would like to introduce two board of trustee members who are in attendance today, Mr. Ted Christianson and Mr. Ken Wetter.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, the board of trustees for Coronation Municipal hospital district No. 39 and Coronation-Pointearth auxiliary hospital and nursing home district No. 16 would like to make you aware of a number of concerns on the part of the boards relating to options being considered by the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. As rural representatives, we are of the firm belief that the population percentage factor option would have a significant negative effect on rural organizations and communities. I am sure a number of these concerns have already been expressed to the committee through its hearings held to date. However, we appreciate the opportunity of presenting these opinions from our perspective at this time.

At the present time, the Chinook electoral division is a large and sparsely but evenly populated area. To expand this division even more would negatively impact on the ability of our MLA to cover and fairly represent all interest groups and/or communities within the division. In an urban electoral division, concerns may be handled at a central constituency office, whereas in a rural area this is not always possible due to distances as well as each community having its own unique problems and concerns. This point may be emphasized by the fact that the Chinook electoral division encompasses eight main municipalities, counties, and special areas within which are multiple villages and hamlets. In addition, there are seven hospital districts and six school board divisions. Concern also exists with distribution of funds to the various electoral divisions. On a per capita basis, rural community service infrastructures, along with health and social services, are probably significantly higher compared to urban centres. With less representation in rural areas, fear exists that the quality of these services will be decreased and an ever increasing funding level will be directed to the urban centres.

The depopulation of rural Alberta is a reality. Should this trend not reverse, this will only compound these concerns in the future as the population percentage factor is applied and resultant adjustments occur to electoral divisions. All Albertans should be entitled to reasonable access to their elected representatives, and in fairness to our elected representatives, they should be entitled to reasonable access to their constituents. The basis of a democratic society is that of the people having a voice in the matter of governance. This has the potential to be eroded for rural residents through implementation of the population percentage factor option. Do not condemn the rural areas to a policy that by virtue of current and anticipated future demographic and economic conditions will result in a continued erosion of rural electoral divisions.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Barry.

Questions from committee members? Stock.

MR. DAY: Barry, if you can give us some feedback, what would the feeling in rural Alberta be, as you see it, if the decision of this committee was just to go ahead and keep everything as it is and then possibly see a court challenge arise out of that? Would the people of the rural area here, as you know them, think that

is a worthwhile use of tax dollars, for us to actually pursue the Alberta concern about redistribution to the Supreme Court? Or would they be antagonistic to us as a government and say, "Why do you run this thing to the Supreme Court?"

MR. WALKER: Responding from my own perspective, my opinion on that would be that I think there have been a number of formulas presented specifically today – and I'm sure there have been at some of the other committee hearings that have been held to date – that obviously there are inequities within the system, and that's the reason this committee exists. My opinion is that there are other alternatives out there that can address the issues rural Alberta is facing as well as the issues urban centres are also facing and that would still fall within the Charter and would not be contested by whatever party in the courts.

MR. DAY: Would your trustees, do you think – and I know you can't speak for them – favour adoption of a formula of the type which has been brought out: X equals A plus B plus C , tying in distance, square miles, that type of thing?

MR. WALKER: I believe so. The concern is that with the Chinook riding being so sparsely populated, to come up with the figures that have been proposed for the population base for electoral divisions, it's just going to be lost within a much larger area. If there are other factors built into that formula that would allow for variances such as distances, number of communities, et cetera, although the division may increase in size, it would not increase in size under the present proposal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Yes, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Barry, thank you for your presentation. You've used a term a number of people have used, and that is "reasonable access." I wonder if you could sort of define for me what your definition is of "reasonable access."

MR. WALKER: Well, my definition is probably substantially different than, say, someone living in an urban centre, where a half-hour drive to them is a major undertaking in a lot of cases. That's difficult to say, and I don't know how a person could absolutely define that. I guess from our perspective we feel that the riding is already substantially large and that, as has already been commented on today, there are individuals who have traveled substantial distances within the riding. I believe at the last session, although I was not in attendance, the comment was made that one individual had a longer drive within the riding to get back home than someone returning to Calgary. So I think that shows you some of the scope. I recognize that our distances are nowhere near as great as, say, the Fort McMurray area, but again I think any formula that's developed has to take into account the variances that exist around the province, whether they be geographical or what have you.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? Any others?
Thanks very much, Barry.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Doug.

MR. KASTELIC: Committee members and members of the public, my name is Doug Kastelic. I am a school trustee with Rangeland school division No. 9. Rangeland school division No. 9 is pleased to have this opportunity to present a brief summary of concerns in regard to electoral boundaries, in particular in regard to the possibility that our own constituency of Chinook could be seriously affected by a revision of present boundaries. Our concerns may be summarized as follows.

It is a concern that on the basis of the B.C. experience representation by population seems to have become the overriding factor in considering constituency boundaries. It is our contention that this is an overly simplistic approach to a very complicated problem. Electoral boundaries must recognize the need for effective representation based on practical limits to the area an MLA can effectively serve. They must strive to delineate areas with common interests and common problems, to provide reasonable representation to both urban and rural areas, and to give some consideration to the ability of major sectors of the economy to be represented. An electoral boundary process which does not take these factors into consideration is neither acceptable nor just, and a court ruling that ignores these factors should be challenged and appealed.

We believe the present Chinook constituency is already approaching a maximum practical size for one MLA to effectively represent. Our MLA must deal with the concerns of approximately 40 different communities. Chinook is certainly one of the larger constituencies, and although not as large as some of the others in the north, it has the added disadvantage of having its population spread relatively evenly throughout the whole of the constituency rather than being concentrated in a few centres. It is less than 15 years since Chinook itself was formed, essentially by joining two former constituencies. If we accept the principle of representation by population as the only factor in electoral boundary placement, then given the facts of urban growth and rural population decline, any adjustments made at this time will likely only temporarily meet the 25 percent criterion referred to in your handout, and we will continue to see further increases in the size and decreases in the number of rural constituencies.

As one of a number of school divisions in the dryland area of eastern Alberta, we feel that we have problems that are common to the other school authorities in Chinook and that our MLA can fairly represent our interests in the Legislature. With a constituency to be expanded to cover more than 14,000 eligible voters, we feel much of that commonality would be lost, that our MLA would no longer be as effectively representing the views and concerns of a unique part of the province, and that our problems would no longer receive the attention they are presently receiving. Even less palatable would be a solution which took the area presently represented by Chinook and divided it among other constituencies surrounding it. In terms of numbers, we are already at a disadvantage. If we were to be splintered apart to join four other constituencies, our voice would no longer be heard.

Finally, there is a concern that the reasonable balance that now exists between rural and urban representation in the province as a whole, if not immediately then eventually, will be destroyed with the acceptance of this one-factor approach to electoral boundaries. We would urge your committee to recommend to the commission that it continue to give serious consideration to all the factors that have traditionally been considered in setting electoral boundaries, and while a variance of no more than 25 percent above or below the average number

of electors in the constituency might be a figure to aim at, they should be prepared to go well beyond that should this be necessary in order to provide otherwise fair and reasonable representation.

Respectfully submitted, Rangeland school division.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Doug. Any questions of Doug? Yes, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just one quick question. How far beyond 25 percent should be considered? You said "well beyond." I was just wondering if you had a figure in mind.

MR. KASTELIC: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?

MR. KASTELIC: I think what we were referring to there is that if there was going to be a variance of more than the 25 percent, other factors would have to be taken into consideration besides just the mathematical number itself.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.
Yes, Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Doug, you mentioned "other factors." Would you two lean towards exploring this formula idea that was brought out by Brian Anderson, taking in distance, square miles, that type of thing?

MR. KASTELIC: Speaking for myself, yes. In putting together the submission, it was unanimous that a simple mathematical formula using 25 percent, for instance, for Alberta would definitely not be acceptable. On the previous day when I was here and also today, some of the formulas, I think, are definitely addressing the areas of concern for rural Albertans with regard to electoral boundaries.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I need to ask a question, if I could, of both Doug and Barry. Let's make an assumption - and this is strictly an assumption; we're just fantasizing here. Let's say the committee was seized with this idea of a formula and went with it along the lines that Mr. Anderson talked about: factor in square miles and also distance to the capital. Okay? Let's just assume that we were doing that, based on people here saying they liked the idea. Let's make another assumption: that Chinook has 15,000 population and Peace River has 10,000. Okay? Let's say Peace River depopulated, and everybody moved to Chinook because they heard what a wonderful MLA was down here. What you would have, then, would be Peace River with as much voting power in the Legislature as Chinook, even though Chinook had more people, when you factor in the distance and the square kilometres. So what I'm trying to get you to understand is that if you like the idea of a formula, could you live with the fact that the formula might mean another constituency with less people would have a vote in the Legislature - one MLA voting for them - just as yours would? Would that be acceptable to you? In 25 words or less.

MR. WALKER: Yes, that's basically what we have right now.

MR. DAY: Okay.

MR. KASTELIC: Yeah. I would also agree. I think one of the main underlying concerns, and it was brought up today many times, is that we do not want to lose the amount of seats in proportion, urban to rural, in Alberta. I think, then, if you look at Peace River from a rural point of view - and again we're talking about the main industry, which would be agriculture - I would say it would be okay.

MR. DAY: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? From the floor?
Thanks very much, Doug.

MR. FRITCHARD: Would Roger Buxton and Jack Horner come up, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Roger, do you want to lead off, please?

MR. BUXTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to make my views known and those of my Unifarm district which I represent, special area 4. At this time I'd like to compliment all of my rural peers for their excellent presentations both now and in February. I agree with most of the comments that were made, and there have been some excellent ideas come forward from there. It's going to be a hard act to follow.

I'm sure you've already had representation from the provincial organization of Unifarm, but I would say again that their policy basically is that the proportion of rural to urban must stay the same and there must be no increase in the number of MLAs. Concern about how much more government we can afford was expressed at the January convention.

The MLA for Chinook is our friend and the friend of almost everybody who lives in this area, and I'm a little concerned about the pressure that's going to be brought on her and her family. I'm concerned also about the life-style of politics, the future of that for any new members that come into this occupation, and the choosing of that occupation if we make this occupation more difficult for them to fulfill their needs. I know that right now our MLA puts a great deal of stress on herself and her family to fulfill the needs of this area, so therefore I'm very sympathetic towards keeping the pressure factor down as much as possible. I think that has been expressed already by my peers, about the tremendous pressure a rural MLA has.

Since the Conservative government has come into power, we've seen a move by that government to look for ways to bring more economic development to rural areas and to keep the population decline in those areas from happening, to the point that now we have our Minister of Municipal Affairs, Ray Speaker, going after ways of enhancing rural areas considerably. I think that if we are going to work towards that end in this province, which I agree with and I think all other rural areas do too, we're really working against ourselves if we change this power structure. The power of our area or the power of the MLAs in the Legislature, as Mr. Kush mentioned, I think is the key to the thing, you know. We've got to keep that balanced.

Our major export from our rural areas, or this rural area, anyway, and a lot of others since we've had the drouth and too much rain in the north and low commodity prices in the last decade, has been our kids. I would suggest to you that's part of the reason why you have the problems you have right now in your cities, when you're talking about high costs of rentals and

high costs of your properties – part of the problem; I know foreign investment is another part of the reason. My kids are in Calgary right now, probably in Mr. Bruseker's constituency. They have bought property there to live there, and they're going to probably choose an urban way of life because they didn't see this area as being a good place to stay in, not for what they wanted out of life. They're in there now competing with your people for jobs, for that real estate or for the rental. I guess more power for the urban areas, as has been suggested by these urban areas, is just going to accelerate this type of urban growth. It just can't help but do so. We've got to do something, I think, if we're going to stop this drain of our best young minds from our rural areas. I would suggest also that Mr. Speaker's type of endeavours will go for naught if we don't consider that.

I'd like to also make a case for the fact that Chinook probably is more disadvantaged than other rural constituencies, especially those areas of the province that have similar rainfall to us. You know, we even have less population in Chinook than some of the major rural constituencies in southern Alberta. The reason for that, of course, is that there has been a major development of water take place in years past in southern Alberta that has enhanced the economy of southern Alberta – and to which I say, more power to them. I think what it's done for southern Alberta is great, but I think the Chinook constituency has that potential here too. If we had the power in this area to develop our full potential in agriculture – political power I'm talking about now. Of course, as long we've got the urban concerns, the environmental concerns that we have right now that weren't present in southern Alberta when the major development was made there in the past, we're going to have to go a lot slower on that right now. This area here has the potential, like southern Alberta, to be a major area of agricultural production if we had this water enhancement we need here that's been spoken about so many times at these hearings. I believe that southern Alberta produces almost 30 percent of our primary agricultural products. A majority of our agricultural processing and value-added is located there, mainly, I would suggest, because of the weather, the good quality crops that come from irrigation, and because of the assured supply. Year after year we're going to have production because you can turn off the rainfall when you need to take the crop off.

Economists tell us that primary agriculture has the greatest spin-offs of just about any primary resource in the province: about 5, 6 to 1 in dollars. Other primary resources mostly situated in rural areas have resulting spin-offs too. I would suggest that it's very retrograde to the province as a whole if the rural areas lose this power that they need politically to go on and develop our production out here, because we actually are the areas of the province that make it possible for the urban areas to survive.

With that, I'd like to thank again the special committee for their indulgence.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Roger. Questions of Roger? Okay. Anyone else? Thanks very much.

Jack.

MR. HORNER: Thank you, gentlemen. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to your committee. I think, first of all, the committee is doing a good job in traveling around the province and a good job in serving the people of the province.

I see a great rift developing between the city residents and the rural residents, and I think that's unfortunate. Alberta is a great

province, with a number of key industries serving us all: the oil and gas industry; coal; sulphur; mining; timber and forest products; agriculture, mainly livestock and grain, but other aspects as well; manufacturing; and tourism. Most of these industries are carried out in rural Alberta, except perhaps for some manufacturing and tourism in the cities. I'm upset, as I said, to see the animosity that I see developing between the urban and rural life. Many of us have relatives living in the city. Many of us have friends living in the city. Many of us may well have lived in the city. I've just been brought aware of the time I lived in Edgemont, which is now Edgemont in Calgary, in Frank's riding. I'm very happy that I moved out of there, mind you. I'm sure a whole lot of people are living there now who would love to move out, too, if given the opportunity to find employment outside the city. Most people want to live in rural Alberta.

The government is obliged to attempt to have all regions grow and develop equally, or relatively equally. If there are slower regions, then efforts should be made to try and help them develop relatively equal to the rest of the province. How can this be done? Most people settle along arteries of transportation. It used to be in the early days that people settled along the rivers. Now they're settling along the roads. Highway 36 serves this area. We were promised it was going to be paved in 1971, and we're still waiting for it. To give you some idea as to the importance of it – I live at Pollockville – we ship oil out of there, about 1,200 barrels a day. A third of that oil belongs to the province of Alberta. We residents haven't received very much in return. If you think of 25 years, a third of 1,200 barrels a day going out of there, and we haven't got a paved road yet. One time they were hauling the oil out by trucks. I thought sure as guns we'd get a paved road then, but we didn't even then. So it gives you some idea of what you can do.

People do settle along roads. I had a fellow haul a load of hay to me this winter. He said, "How far south am I to the No. 1?" "Oh," I said, "You're about 40 miles." He was going back to Red Deer. He said, "Well, I think I'll go back by No. 1; it's a better road." "Well," I said, "it's shorter to take 36." "Oh, yeah," he said. "This truck rides pretty rough empty. I'm going to go back by No. 1." I think he was making a mistake, but it was his truck. He'd delivered the hay and where he went from there, I didn't care. But he chose to drive down the No. 1. That gives you an idea of what roads will do to enhance population areas.

Water has been mentioned a number of times, and I mentioned earlier this morning that the ruling by the ERCB was a mistake for rural Alberta for an attempt to balance the growth of our province. It should have taken into consideration future use of that water as it flowed out of that Dickson dam that we taxpayers built. The government has done some steps, though, with the spreading around of civil servants to the various areas of the province. Hanna has benefited from that. The development of the Sheerness electrical plant through coal has been a good step in an attempt to bring about some degree of balance.

But now to deal with some of the more urgent concerns of your select committee. The provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission Act was last passed in 1982, and it stated that there should be a redistribution after every election. To me that was a mistake, and is wrong.

MR. CHAIRMAN: After every second election.

MR. HORNER: The chairman suggests after two elections.

That still is too short a period. The average time for an election in this province has been every three years. If you go back in history quite a ways, that would bear out. Constituents and politicians, whether they be MLAs or MPs, need to have time to develop their presence in a riding, and the people have to have time to get to know their MP or MLA. Certainly I think the provincial government should copy their redistributions after the federal scene, which follows every decennial census, and the ridings therefore remain approximately the same for 10 years. This gives you time to allow for growth or diminishing growth. It gives you a better view of the diminishing growth.

So my first recommendation is that you change the Electoral Boundaries Commission and follow the decennial census.

My second recommendation is that it be based on population, not on a voters list. I don't know where they got the voters list idea. As you pointed out, Mr. Chairman, at the last meeting, quite often some people don't allow themselves to be registered as voters and some people are missed, whereas your population is a far better way, because you catch a person at 17 years old in an election on a voters list, and he's not on the voters list, but by the time the election comes along, he or she may well be old enough to vote. So that's my second recommendation.

Now, much has been made of the McLachlin ruling in British Columbia and the Charter of Rights and the 25 percent ruling that set down. The federal electoral boundaries Act passed in 1964-65 sets out the 25 percent figure based on population. I might add as an aside that I well remember the debate. At the time the government was attempting to rule on a 20 percent variance. Through opposition to the 20 percent, we got it up to 25 percent. By "we," I mean a whole host of people. But the 25 percent is not any magical figure; it didn't just arrive from a good bit of hardheaded arguing that 25 percent was better than 20 percent. And we won the day. McLachlin, in striking down the B.C. distribution with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, did not disagree with the 25 percent. What she did was disagree with the huge difference beyond the 25 percent which was the actual occurrence. The 25 percent figure is used in the federal electoral boundaries Act, with, of course, I might add - they even make an exception for the Yukon and the Northwest Territories in that Act.

So my third recommendation is that you look closely at enlarging the 25 percent figure in your own redistribution Act. As I say, there's no magical law that says 25 percent is right. If the desire of the government is to reach a greater degree of balance in the province of Alberta for reasons A, B, and C and D and E and F, you can say: you should be 28 percent, or 30 percent. I'm certain that some may challenge it, but even McLachlin, who is now in the Supreme Court, might find that 28 percent is necessary in the province of Alberta if the key factor is to hold somewhere close to a balance.

My fourth recommendation is that after your select committee makes its report, a redistribution commission will be set up. I would hope that there be strong rural representation on that commission. I can't help but note, Mr. Chairman, that you're outnumbered on this committee, that most of the committee members are city members. So I just hope you have strong rural representation on that commission.

In the past rivers and roads played a great part in forming electoral boundaries. Today trade centres, media centres - by that I mean newspaper centres, radio centres - and telephone exchanges should be used to reach the common area that an MLA can serve.

Your committee has performed a very good service for rural

Alberta, and I think in your travels you must have convinced thousands that the Triple E Senate is unobtainable. If it's not attainable here, surely most will realize it's unobtainable federally. It's not good enough, I might add, to say that Ottawa has two Houses and we only have one here. I add that in stating I do not believe there should be any increase in the members of the Legislature in numbers. It's been suggested at this meeting and the previous one here in Hanna that perhaps the cities could have more and the rural areas would then stay the same. For those who are afraid of being out of balance, that would still put you out of balance. In my experience I've never known a rural member that would change places with a city member. I have yet to meet one that would. It all depends on the way you feel and how you feel about the situation, but, no, I have never met one that would, and I don't believe you could find one either. The rural members have the distances, but they do get to know their constituents better, they know the area better, and their people have fixed opinions and stay with them longer than the cities, in my opinion in any case.

Many have said that representation by population has failed western Canada. I don't believe it has at all. We do not have representative government. We have a parliamentary form of government run by the party system, and that's what has failed western Canada, if anything has failed western Canada. I might add just in closing that an elected Senate will not help, because it will only contribute to the party system and the present parliamentary system.

Thank you very much, gentlemen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Jack.

Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Horner. When you spoke that perhaps there could be a greater variance that might survive that Charter challenge, I'm wondering - you tossed out two figures, 28 percent and 30 percent - if you've got . . .

MR. HORNER: The choice is yours.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I was hoping that the choice might be yours, sir.

MR. HORNER: I'd say 30 percent. You know, if I was making the ruling I'd say 30, but you have to do some arguing with your fellow colleagues. I'd saw off at 28, but I'd start with 30 if I was there.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just one quick question. I appreciated your presentation. You talked about keeping the total number at 83, but you didn't really comment about the inequities that are occurring in sizes right now. I wonder if you might want to address that.

MR. HORNER: There's no question that you cannot. On this redistribution you cannot maintain the balance - what is it? - 42-41 now.

MR. BRUSEKER: That's what it is now.

MR. HORNER: There's no question that you cannot do that, in my opinion. I'm only here representing myself, and that's a pleasure, but you can strive to do the best you can. That's why I suggested that the 25 percent is not carved in stone in any place. It's in the federal Act of '64-65, the boundaries Act of the federal government, but they didn't find it written in stone anywhere when they put it in. I can assure you of that. The government of the day wanted it at 20, and we, meaning the whole host of people that were there, argued and won with 25. If we had been better arguers, we might have got 26 - I don't know - 27. I'm just suggesting that you could certainly enhance that.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's just an observation I make, Jack, before you leave. You commented on the makeup of our committee and your hope - that's one of your recommendations on the commission - that there be some rural representation. One of the things our committee did was to visit and meet with former commission members from Winnipeg, Regina, and Victoria, because all three provinces had recently gone through redistribution. One of the things that we discovered in Winnipeg, to our horror, was that they'd had a three-member commission, and the commission was chaired by a judge and had on it the Chief Electoral Officer and the president of the University of Manitoba. The Chief Electoral Officer, who's the person normally very knowledgeable about natural boundaries in rural areas, rivers and so on, was quite ill at the time and therefore didn't play an active role in the commission. The other thing the three members had in common was that they all came from the city of Winnipeg, all three. There were some horrendous mistakes made in the rural areas in terms of ignoring natural boundaries and drawing lines that required someone to cross one of those natural barriers without a bridge. They had to go back in their hearings and make some substantial changes within the terms of the report.

So I think it's fair to say that while we haven't talked about it in any detail, the members of the committee who were in Winnipeg all came back with a strong feeling that we've got to ensure there's a good balance on the commission when it is finally struck.

MR. HORNER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: Our final two presenters today are Doug Johnson and Paul Marshall.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Doug, would you like to start off, please.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Hon. chairman, members of the Legislative Assembly, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for this opportunity again. The foggy weather probably bothers me as much as it does you, although some people have stated that you guys work in a fog all the time anyway.

MR. MARSHALL: I thought this was a clear day.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, this is a clear day. Right.
I appeared before this committee at Viking . . .

MR. DAY: The meeting's adjourned, Mr. Chairman.

MR. JOHNSON: I appeared before this committee at Viking, and I presented a brief there outlining a new way to divide the province's electoral districts by population. I used the illustration of a wagon wheel, but my youngest son told me to use pizza, as it is better understood. The electoral boundaries under this plan would fan out from the major population centres, much like you would cut a pizza. This way an MLA would not be judged to be rural or urban and would probably have about half his constituents from both rural and urban areas. True, most of these boundaries would be rather lengthy, but every riding would be roughly the same.

I hope this committee is very aware of the grass-roots movement that is asking for less government at every level. With the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary calling for more government, they are dramatically moving away from their campaign promises, and I feel they have lost their credibility by doing so. I feel that 75 MLAs are enough. I realize how hard you guys work, and maybe you'd like some more MLAs to share your workload, but surely you don't want any more hands or fingers in your pockets, and I don't want any more in mine.

If by your recommendations you take the easy way out and just add more urban seats, how long will it be before the so-called rural ridings ask and lobby for some kind of Senate? Under my plan every MLA would represent Albertans and not just a group of either urban or rural voters. I don't think we would hear an MLA campaigning to just satisfy either rural or urban voters but would be developing policy that would benefit all Albertans, just as they should.

By the way, in closing I would like to point out that I feel very well represented in the Legislature with the Premier as my MLA and Shirley McClellan as my brother's MLA.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Doug. Any questions of Doug? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Doug, we had a chance to talk in Vermilion, and I just want to put a question to you. I don't know if I put it to you in Vermilion. You talk about MLAs trying to represent 50 percent rural, 50 percent urban population. I don't know if it can be done logistically. It'd be interesting to see if it might be done.

One of the things we have here today is a committee made up of all parties that are represented in the Legislature, and what I've certainly heard, traveling around the province, is that too often we don't have the opportunity to talk to our MLA or our MLA's too busy due to travel or other commitments. Would you be at all in favour of committees of the Legislature being struck that are all-party, so that six or eight or 10 members of the Legislature that represent health care or education or resource management would travel, so that you've got the ears of 10 members as opposed to just having the ears of one member? I put that out to you, and then I'll come back for comment.

MR. JOHNSON: Just to comment on that, committees mean more wages, more staff, more infrastructure. I don't like that thought. I do like the thought of maybe more ears being

available in that direction.

MR. SIGURDSON: I know it may very well mean more cost, and that's a concern I as a politician have. My comment back is that I know I have learned a great deal going throughout our province listening to a lot of people about electoral boundaries. I've not only had information about electoral boundaries given to me, but I've had other concerns that have been raised with me as well, and I've appreciated those concerns. I think it's probably benefited me in my work and broadened my perspective, and I guess if you want to talk about having additional costs and you make a wedge, a pizza or a wagon wheel, our travel up and down the roads might create costs too. Under your formula I might have Edmonton-Belmont/Whitecourt. I'm not sure.

MR. JOHNSON: Right to the border maybe.

MR. SIGURDSON: Right to the border. Yeah, right out to Lloydminster. It may increase costs that way.

MR. JOHNSON: May I just interject? Every MLA would be the same.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes, indeed.

MR. JOHNSON: You wouldn't be just traveling a few miles or be able to walk across your constituency. You'd be under the same conditions. My kids use computers at school, and just for the heck of it I asked them to do something with it. It didn't take them very long to come up with a pretty good looking map of 75 ridings. Sure, some of them are 100, 250 miles long; some of them ran from the middle of the province to the border. But pretty near all of them are the same.

What I'm trying to get at more than anything else in my two presentations is that I don't think the Legislature as a whole represents Albertans first in a lot of cases. I see problems developing with the rural and urban split at just about everything we do. Environmentally we see it coming to the front more and more where there are people, say, in Calgary trying to influence what happens at Fort McMurray. There are people like myself in a rural, sparsely populated area trying to influence what happens in Calgary too.

I mean, it works both ways. I don't like the way things are going. It's just not right for Alberta.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?
Yes, Stock.

MR. DAY: Doug, I've been thinking about your wheel since that cold night you first presented the thought, and I see the centre of the wheel. Have you got an answer for this? At that centre you've got all these spokes, or the pieces of pizza, and they're coming in on a focal point. What you've done there is absolutely split into maybe - let's say it's a 12-slice pizza. Right at the centre of that constituency you've separated neighbourhoods, you've cut across streets, and you've gone through a community recreation area. The person who's just down the street a bit from me, as the MLA, has a concern, because just across the street from him, in the constituency I represent, is the big swimming pool or the rec centre or whatever, and he's in another constituency. How do you resolve the disintegration

that happens as you get close to the centre of that pizza? Do you get pepperoni on one side and mushrooms on the other?

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. I don't like either one of them; ham and pineapple is better. Just an example: I live right in the corner of the Stettler riding. My brother lives right in the corner of the Chinook riding. We have farmland right in the corner of the Drumheller riding. You would handle it the same way we have to handle it: very damn difficult.

MR. DAY: I appreciate the difficulty. Maybe what you and your brother are trying to do is get in the same constituency on a wheel here, are you?

MR. JOHNSON: No. If Shirley or the Premier are, yeah, we'll go along with that.

MR. DAY: But you see my point. It's difficult for you fellows . . .

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, I see your point. It does come to a point. It could be U-shaped, or it could be blocks of a city type of thing that are similar. Sure, you could use them that way. It doesn't have to come to a direct point. But as I say, it's something to think about. It may be something to look at.

MR. DAY: I just want you to know I've been thinking about it.

MR. JOHNSON: Good man. I appreciate that.

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

MR. MARSHALL: I'm presenting this brief on behalf of the Delia Home and School Association. Mr. Chairman, members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, ladies and gentlemen, the Delia Home and School Association has considered the impact which possible boundary redistribution could place on our existing school division and its educational stakeholders. The current urban/rural representation in the province of Alberta now addresses the sparsity of population in some of the more outlying school divisions and/or electoral constituencies. If changes were made, for instance, to expand these boundaries to fall with 25 percent of average, the constituency of Chinook would no doubt have to be enlarged by approximately 5,000. This change would only further complicate the problems of MLA attention to school boards, health units, and municipal councils. In our opinion, we need to maintain the current rural/urban ratio of representation.

Our main concern is naturally the negative impact on the quality of our children's education that would suffer under reduced rural representation. Sparsity of population in rural Alberta will continue to be a more significant problem to all levels of government if boundaries are continually expanded to facilitate the needs of our urban neighbours. In 1985-86 Dr. Steve Cymbol conducted special hearings with regard to changes in the boundaries affecting Starland School Division which would have resulted in centralization with the Drumheller School Division. This proposal met vehement opposition from all local ratepayers, with considerable support from our other rural school divisions. The impact on busing, quality of education, and erosion of community and family life were main concerns that were addressed, and we see the possible electoral boundary

changes as having a negative impact on all the above.

We therefore ask the committee to not consider disturbing our already too vast rural constituencies but to address a more positive approach by assisting MLAs and representatives of the government in dealing favourably with the problems. For example, Shirley McClellan, our MLA for Chinook, is currently obliged to attend to the educational needs of Starland, Rangeland, Acadia, Berry Creek, Neutral Hills, and Medicine Hat school divisions. The task of her representing us and of our representing our issues is difficult enough at the present due to the large geographic area which affects time and travel, numbers of people to attend gatherings to address particular concerns, phone calls, and her attention to the number of constituency offices needed to cover the various locations. As a home and school association, we again would like you to bear in mind the effects a possible change in electoral representation would have on the current quality of education of our children and their future.

I'd also like to add a little personal end to this, and you can't blame the home and school association for any of these comments. These are personal. I'd first like to say that our school board is in two constituencies now. There's some good to that and some bad. Because of that I'd like to also say there's a bitterness at that border. We were in Hanna-Oyen; then we were out. The border's been moved back and forth twice now in my young history. It caused a lot of resentment. There are people that don't give a damn if they've got an MLA anymore. They don't know who it is, but they don't care, some of them. That's sad.

In one of the briefs presented earlier I liked the logic of the RCMP numbers. We weren't represented by numbers per thousand. You know, there's an area out here and it's got to be covered. I hope that logic falls through. You have to remember that there's a lot of urban use, and that's been said here of our rural constituencies, passing through it. Some of us in rural areas argue with a lot of the roads that are built because they're of more benefit to the urban people going through them than they are to the actual people that live here.

An urban constituent and a rural can cross the boundaries. If you're not serviced or satisfied with your MLA's performance, you can take your beef across the border. If somebody that lives in your constituency in Calgary doesn't like the way you're performing, they have the opportunity to go across the border and talk to another member of the same party or of another party if they feel you're not representing them. We do that also. I have a problem believing anybody in the city has suffered because of weak representation, numberswise. Numberswise you can't always deal with numbers. There are lots of things you get involved with where numbers aren't taken into consideration. In the free trade talks we voted 1 to 1 with the States, and there are 10 times as many people. That happens all over in all kinds of different constituencies, a country being a constituency in that case.

If it's such an advantage having this strong vote rurally, I think it's a good policy for the government to try to repopulate the rural area by saying: "Hey, your vote is worth three or four times as much. Move out here and try to scratch out a living. Or if you think it's easier to get elected out here, try it. You only need so many votes." I could only justify more members of the Legislature when I saw an instance of people in the city not being serviced. I make reference to comparing politicians to urinals. That's a poor reference, but once you have one, it services the first fellow, but it'll service a lot of guys. The

numbers consideration has to be taken into advantage. You need a service for the first person, but that service will satisfy a lot of people. That's what must be taken into consideration in setting up constituency boundaries.

Now, I said earlier I was going to sneak this in, and I promise I'll try to be speedy. I have a beef about telephones. My constituency has I don't know how many exchanges - dozens, literally dozens. I said earlier in our little town hall meeting that the service club I belong to had to pay an extra toll up front to get service to Drumheller. It's a toll charge to call the MD where I pay my taxes and my land is. The school where my children go is a toll charge. My kids can't phone home except collect or bum the school phone, and it's a toll charge to them. I'm chairman of the seed cleaning plant in Delia. I'm six miles from that town. It's a long distance call for me to that office and for anybody else on the board to call me. I shouldn't say that; there's a guy east of me. I'm secretary of the minor hockey association: toll charge again to the arena and to the other people on the board. I'm the chairman of the seniors' housing society in Delia, six miles away. It's a toll charge.

Government facilities: I made the instance this morning that I was in Delia one day and I phoned Drumheller to the RITE number because I wanted to phone the weigh scale at Morrin. It's a government facility. They can't do that, because it's a local call from Drumheller, and they can't put local calls through on RITE. But it wasn't local from where I was calling. So the logic there is that I have to phone Drumheller to phone Hanna so they could phone Morrin to get through the system.

Along the lines of this penalty of telephone, it's a tremendous penalty to businesses in the small centres. For instance, we sell our grain in Delia, and we buy our agricultural inputs there. I can't phone any of those businesses without a toll charge. I can't phone my brother that I farm with, who lives just west of me. We can't phone those businesses, but we can phone Drumheller. So I think that's a terrible punishment to these people caught in these small areas. They can phone Drumheller, but the people outside their community can't phone them. The businesses in Delia are dealing with probably four telephone exchanges, and only Drumheller can phone them back. It's quite a penalty, I think.

MR. JOHNSON: That is a terrible punishment, just being able to phone Drumheller. I'll guarantee you that.

MR. MARSHALL: Okay, thank you. I'd like to thank you for your time and for making the second effort to come back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Paul.
Tom or Stock? Go ahead, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thanks for your presentation, Paul. Let me tell you, I was at the 1984 Grey Cup game and at half time I had to go to the urinal. It might service a lot of people, but again it comes back to having crowds [inaudible]. The great Canadian tradition of the Grey Cup is such that by halftime one needs to go, and there were many people that didn't have the opportunity to go. I guess if you use that scenario, and you come back to urban overpopulation or rural depopulation, maybe sometimes you can appreciate the scenario.

I just wanted to point out: in your presentation you said that you weren't aware of anybody being adversely affected. Now, I know that again we have different systems that are set up in terms of a financial structure between schools' funding between

the cities of Edmonton and certainly those boards that may fall within the constituency of Chinook. I just wanted to point out that if you use this analogy, my constituency has at the moment sufficient numbers of schools, but a neighbouring constituency of mine has to bus out approximately 1,500 children every day to schools that are empty in other parts of the city. Now, I would only offer that while they're not being bused for long periods of time, the numbers being bused probably would constitute a crisis in many other communities in our province and there would probably be a school.

So I guess the problems are that there are different problems, that there are some very, very real problems that aren't currently being addressed in all parts of our province, and an equitable distribution of representation may perhaps address that. I don't know if it would, but it might.

MR. MARSHALL: I was also going to comment - I meant to mention your committee's idea of traveling. I think it's expensive but a good idea.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: I actually think the committee idea is a good idea too. It's just that the expense part is kind of gnawing at my back pocket again.

I would just like to add one thing, too, if I may. Education-wise, we have children who live at Endiang, which is where I get my mail, who are on the bus longer than they're in school. Now, it's their choice to go to Stettler school. They could be on the bus to Hanna here or to Delia or to Castor, type of thing, which would cut their busing. But because of the programs that are offered at the William E. Hay composite high school, that's where they've chosen to go, so they've kind of made their own bed, sort of thing, as you say. I'm a bus driver myself. When I hear the urban people start talking about a half-hour bus ride, I've got no time for it. It just doesn't make sense.

MR. SIGURDSON: No, I only raise it . . . I don't know if it will be of any comfort to you, but Stock and I were talking about the problem there this morning and noting that it's a four hours a day bus ride. Again, it's very difficult to try and measure that in terms of individual population or in terms of an individual's commitment to getting an education. One of the ways we measure things these days is that we have person-years of employment, and at so many hours. Now, by any stretch of the imagination, I'm not trying to lessen the time that how many students ride that four hours a day. It may very well equal the 1,500 students who ride a half hour a day. But again, it's just a matter of problems and dollars and more people trying to get more ideas into a central government and everybody running out of time for whatever reason.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Tom.
Stock.

MR. DAY: Paul, you mentioned the logic of the RCMP using size in determining the number of officers to cover an area. Do you know if they actually have a specific formula they use?

MR. MARSHALL: In one of the briefs that was presented earlier here, it was mentioned that, by hundreds of people, we had more representation, more officers. It was just that the expanse, the size, the area, was the need, not the number.

Because there's nobody crooked here anyway.

MR. DAY: Right. So I understand they do use some kind of formula. We can follow that up.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, it was in one of the other briefs. I was just jumping from there.

MR. DAY: Yeah; okay.

Just for information, too, as far as people being fed up with one MLA so crossing the border of the constituency to go to the other. I can certainly let you know from my experience. As late as last night, as a matter of fact, I got a call from someone. They said, "I've got this problem, and I live in such-and-such an area." I said, "Well, you don't live in my constituency." They said, "No, but I'd kind of like you to work on my problem." I said, "Listen, I've got 20,000 electors, plus people who aren't registered, in my constituency, and though I appreciate your concern, I honestly can't handle your problem. You're going to have to phone your MLA." That's how we work it in our area. I would think it's the same in Edmonton and Calgary. I don't know.

MR. MARSHALL: It would depend on the problem.

MR. DAY: The crossover doesn't happen. At least, I don't allow it to happen, if it's coming over.

MR. MARSHALL: It depends on the problem.

MR. DAY: I just wanted to assure you that does not happen in a wholesale way. We might say, "Well, look, I'll call so and so for you or bring it to their attention," or something, but you don't get MLAs in the cities jumping in, grabbing the problems of other constituents. I just throw that out for information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's stay on this point for a moment. Shirley, were you on this specific?

MRS. McCLELLAN: No, I have to leave.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. McCLELLAN: So my comment was just going to be at the end.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Then let's do that.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry to interrupt, but I have to go and visit the area Paul is referring to, which has been popped in and out of constituencies often. And because of this meeting being late, I'm running into the same thing I did at the last one, where I have booked into constituency meetings in Delia.

Before I leave, I do want to say thank you to the people for coming back and for hearing my constituents and others make their presentations. I think probably you have heard from my constituents and others that we don't have any feeling of animosity to our urban counterparts, that perhaps even here more than other areas like urban areas, there's a greater understanding of the dependency we have on each other, and that our concerns are for Alberta as whole.

I guess I'm pleased that the presentations have commented on the difficulties I as an MLA in a rural area may encounter.

Frankly, until I heard all these, I hadn't realized it was quite that tough. But I do appreciate - I didn't feed this to the constituents. I guess as an MLA I feel very humble and grateful that my constituents have centred on the efforts I make and particularly the sacrifices my family makes in only seeing me probably six or eight hours a week. So thank you for coming. I do apologize, but Delia's important.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks for your comments, Shirley. Stock, do you want to carry on?

MR. DAY: That completes my comments. Thank you.

MR. MARSHALL: All right. Now, in rebuttal there to your comment, something just dawned on me. For myself, if I had an issue that I felt my MLA was performing as well as he or she could do, and I thought, "You know, it probably wouldn't hurt if I just went in and bugged Frank or Tom or somebody and just rode his ear for a while here and present this and lobby, you know, outside my constituency." That's obviously done, I would think.

MR. DAY: If it's an issue that's broader than your constituency. But if it's specifically related . . .

MR. MARSHALL: Well, if it's an issue that's relevant to my constituency, but you're all going to vote on it.

MR. DAY: Lobbying is a different thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're really on two different issues. If I may just make a really quick comment, it may address how it's done. I'll use as an example our own area. The MD of Taber has three MLAs who represent portions of it. Occasionally someone will call from an area that's outside the area I represent. If it's someone I know really well, someone who's recently moved into the area and I think is not aware they're in Alan Hyland's part of the MD or Ray Speaker's part . . . In a rural area you don't say: "Well, I'm not your MLA. Here's a phone number." You say . . .

MR. MARSHALL: No, I'm not being that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I'm sure you weren't. I'm just explaining how we do it. We'll say, "Yes, I'll work on that with Alan Hyland, your MLA." You work through it in that way, but you sure don't . . .

MR. JOHNSON: Then you phone Alan right away and say, "Look, you've got a problem."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Well, we work on it together. In a sense it's a subtle, diplomatic way of transferring it to the MLA. If it's an older person, and there was a recent boundary change, you take that into account as well.

Anything else on this? Okay, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks, Paul, for your presentation. I just wanted to ask you if the Delia Home and School Association

gave any thought to discussing the presentations made by the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary, which basically said to keep the rural at 41 and add to the Legislature by adding some to the cities. Did you discuss that at all and come up with any kind of consensus?

MR. MARSHALL: As that association, no.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do you have a personal opinion on it?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I would only like to see increased numbers when there was really a problem because of lack of representation. And representation is a relative thing too. You can be representing 10 people very badly or 20,000 very well. Quality comes in.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay.

One of the questions I had was sort of related to your presentation, specifically regarding amalgamating Starland and Drumheller school divisions. You said there was tremendous opposition to it, and I was wondering if you recall why there was such opposition.

MR. MARSHALL: Oh, because you're killing it.

MR. JOHNSON: Killing Delia.

MR. MARSHALL: You're making something, but you're killing lots of little ones. For instance, we had a situation where you had two sides of logic. Both arguments were right. You had the edge of our school division sitting on Drumheller. Like, they fall into Drumheller, but they're in our school division. They had a little school there, a smaller school. The numbers fell down, so they couldn't maintain this school. For years they even had supplementary requisitions and stuff to maintain that school, and they made great efforts. There's a great community, and they supported that school. But it came to the day when it couldn't support itself, even with the subsidy. All right. Looking at it through their eyes, they said, "Well, I don't want to get on a bus and travel farther from civilization over to Delia." They're going to travel 15 to 20 miles to the Delia school when they can travel 10 and be in Drumheller. If numbers mean anything, a bigger school is more opportunity.

Well, this met tremendous opposition, mostly for preservation of your own life. The school division couldn't just say: "Yeah, that makes sense. Go ahead." They could see all of a sudden that the north side would say, "Well, hell, we're not that far from Stettler." Then the east side, like myself - my kids go to school in Delia, but I'm 14 miles from Hanna. So they didn't want to see it die. Maybe in years to come it will, but there was great opposition to it. Right now it's offering kindergarten to grade 12 education in a very well-run school, in my mind. That's what all that was over. It was quite a hot potato.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'm sure it would have been. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The gentleman at the back.

MR. SUMNER: There is no organization without problems, and this is one that apparently has some problems. But when you make your final decision, I hope you don't try to solve one problem and create three new ones. Maybe that could happen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes; a fair caution.

Anyone else? Yes, sir. It's John, I think.

MR. KLOBERDANZ: I guess I'd like to reiterate something our MLA said a while ago. If I left any thoughts in your mind that I was antiurban in my submission, I would like to tell you that an awful lot of problems can be solved by good communication. This group that is traveling through - now, I've heard different ones make mention that you've learned something from it. Let me assure you, so have we. Those of us that have made presentations have had to sit down and think and decide, you know, what is our problem, and with it has to come some logic. And there has to be something else. I don't know how you'd define it and if you could get it by injection. There's a lot of us who need it. It's called common sense, to be able to sit down across the table from someone that may not necessarily have an opposing view but a view that is different than yours and come to a consensus and a compromise that you can both live with. What I'm hoping this group can do is look at this and come back with a recommendation that we can all live with happily. I'm not totally satisfied, but I can't be.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, John.

Yes, sir.

MR. JOHNSON: May I be excused? I've got to drive a school bus shortly. If they have kids walking home, they get a little testy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I can understand that.

Yes.

MR. FAWCETT: Doug Fawcett's the name. I just think that good advice would be to avoid a rift, and maybe MLAs, urban and rural, should pair up on some problems. When working on some of these urban problems, take a rural member with them. Maybe it's a nightmare, but John touched on communication, and maybe there has to be more of that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. KARY: We've heard a lot of statistics on how the rural life compares to urban life and how important it is. I quote just two sentences given to me by my colleague who presented a brief on behalf of the Veteran board of trade the last time around. It's taken from the brochure from the Olds College: Agriculture remains the backbone of Olds College programs just as it's the backbone of our economy. It's a fact that one-quarter to one-third of Canada's jobs come from an evolving, sophisticated, agricultural sector which employs 18 people for every producer. I think those figures are very outstanding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, they sure are. Thanks for sharing them with us. It's good.

Anyone else before I turn to committee members for summation? Okay, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was doing my constituency tour not too long ago. I have a habit of going to the senior citizens' homes; I've got five. This one particular time I asked people where they were from, because again we had a

problem. They didn't get a percentage increase as high as some of the rental accommodation, but they had all had increases recently from their foundation that provides them with housing. Two of the 20 were from Edmonton originally, and everybody else was at one time a rural resident. It was just sort of an interesting fact that we don't have the kind of facilities, perhaps, in some of the rural settings that we ought to, but we have problems that come in that have to be dealt with. The problems that are generated by us, whether we live in Delia or whether we live in downtown Edmonton or Calgary, don't necessarily know a boundary.

We talk about communications. I couldn't agree with you more, that we have to communicate. Therein lies part of the problem too. We've heard, when we go around to the committee hearings, that rural people like to have face-to-face meetings with their MLAs. So do urban constituents. Albertans aren't all that much different. If you had a choice of meeting somebody face-to-face or over the telephone, I would hazard the guess that chances are that 99 percent of the folk are going to say: "I'd rather meet you up front. I can see what you look like, I can see what your body English is, and we'll get to know each other a little better."

So we've got a tough job trying to massage all of this stuff together and come up with some kind of formula or something that's equitable. When the report comes down, whatever's contained in that report - you said you're hoping it's going to be a collection of common sense and that we'll all be able to live with it. I hope you don't think some members have won or other members have lost if there's something in the report that you disagree with, because what we're trying to do as we've gone around the province is listen to everybody, and you've made our job tough. You know, the formulas that sometimes lawyers and mathematicians and statisticians come up with are a framework for us to live with that we've got to fit in. But you've made the job more difficult, and I thank you for that and look forward to having your comments back when the report's finally out.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Stock.

MR. DAY: Just two quick comments. It's come up about committees traveling around and a rural MLA matched with an urban. Just to reassure you and to let you know if you're not aware, our government caucus actually puts a lot of time into that type of pooling of MLAs. At any given time there are a number of committees that would be actually touring the province, getting information on various issues. It might be related to agriculture; it might be industry; it might be environment. So we do that. We try and also keep an eye on the fiscal restraint side, but I personally find very valuable that committee work that is done in terms of going around the province.

Also, in our own caucus every member is equal, whether they're from the city or whether they're from a rural area. So I learn a lot in caucus listening to Shirley, for instance, and she learns a lot listening to Bob. There really is a pooling of that type of information. I've learned more about Alberta just listening to my colleagues in the last three years than any amount of study could possibly have done. So just to reassure you, as a government we focus on that type of pooling of information in traveling as a priority. Also, I appreciate the sentiment coming that we don't want to see a rift develop. That's something that's going to help us in terms of putting our

thoughts together in the report, that people aren't driving wedges here; they're looking for solutions. But they're saying: "Be sensitive to us. Don't forget us." That's exactly what we want to do. So thanks for your time and your input.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Stock.
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: I think it's been said fairly well, but I just want to compliment John on his comments. I really think you said it very well, John. The only other thing I would say is that while you're not antiurban, we're also not antirural. I think back to the events of the last couple of weeks in Calgary, and sometimes I wish I lived in the rural areas, because we seem to be killing one another off in the city too quickly and easily. Be that as it may, I'm an urban resident, for the time being at any rate. I guess the only thing that's certain about this report that's going to come down is that there ain't no pleasing all the folks all the time. So I hope the report does address the needs of as many people as possible.

I must say that I'm really pleased that so many people came out here a second time. It shows your concern. Maybe the comments you're making that rural residents are more in touch with what's going on in government may in fact be true; I don't know. I won't debate that. But I think it's a compliment to you folks and the folks who have already left as well that they came out a second time. So thank you for your effort and for coming out, especially some folks who have come out a couple of times, like Doug, who made two presentations.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank. As those of you who were here at our last meeting know, I've made a practice of trying to summarize and capture the key point or points made by the various presenters.

It was appropriate that the first presenter talked about the population decline which has occurred in this part of the province and that did occur from the 1920s into the early 1970s, and then we saw a slight increase in population and a stabilizing. But a caution with that that our population is aging, and with the aging factor go increased demands on our social and health programs. Taking into account rural representation, we should consider the area as well as the population. That's been a reoccurring theme that we've had in many of the hearings across the province.

Then it was put to us very succinctly that the governments' - really the federal government, but the province has supported it to a degree - cheap-food policy has led to a destruction of rural economics, and the presenter went to some length to explain how that has occurred. While I'm sure that was not an intentional move by either of the governments or by individuals within the governments, it's been one of the end results. In our town hall session prior to the commencement of the meeting, we heard the MLA for this area talk about our subsidies to agriculture, which are really nothing more than a consumer subsidy. That's the end result of our cheap-food policy.

Again we were told that there's too much emphasis being placed on the B.C. court case and the decision in British Columbia, that we should not be giving the kind of attention to that decision that we seem to be. A formula was suggested, looking at three key components: the constituency, its distance from the capital; the size of the constituency; and the number of local governments within the constituency. We were then

reminded that rural Alberta generates approximately 80 percent of the provincial revenue, and that should be a factor.

Again, distance factors within a rural riding like Chinook, and one presenter graphically described the distance from his home to the meeting here in Hanna. A presenter suggested that what's really taking place is a power struggle for seats, and I think that was a direct reference to a couple of briefs presented by mayors of major cities. Then a new formula was presented, suggesting we take a look at 25 percent of the seats for Edmonton, 25 percent for Calgary, 25 percent for what were referred to as semirural, and 25 percent for straight rural.

Again we heard the suggestion that all Albertans should be entitled to reasonable access to their MLA, and that's a reoccurring theme. Representation by population is overly simplistic in its approach to a complex problem. That's a fair observation as well, and to be fair, keep in mind that even the proposal of the plus/minus 25 percent is not straight representation by population. I'm not making an argument for it; I'm merely pointing out that it does give leeway in a system. We should continue to use all factors which have been used in the past in determining the formulas used in the makeup of our ridings. As you know from our last meeting, we went to some length to describe the old system, which saw seven urban voters equal four rural voters. That was to take into account geography and number of municipalities and so on.

Again we were reminded that there should not be new seats created to solve the problem, and that's been a reoccurring theme as well. While there've been some exceptions to that, the vast majority have suggested to us that we not try to increase the size of the Assembly in order to solve the problem. Maintain the current ratio of urban to rural members. Again we were reminded that the government should continue in its efforts to decentralize services. Many linked the economic growth with political representation, which was an important comment.

Then there was a series of recommendations made. One was that - and this was an interesting one because we've heard arguments that we should go from redistribution after every second election to redistribution after every election. That's been made by one, two, or three presenters, as I recall. Keeping in mind that Alberta currently has one of the more advanced systems, there's still a number of jurisdictions that redistribute after every 10 years, although there's been a gradual shift from the 10-year position to after every second election. This particular presenter said that we should move the other way: go from after every second election back to the 10-year position, use a total population rather than a voters list, be very careful in terms of ensuring that there's strong rural representation on the commission, and look at enlarging the 25 percent factor, and 26, 28, and even 30 percent was used as an example. Then we were reminded that we might use a wagon wheel or pizza formula so that you've got a mix of urban and rural interests in a constituency. Again, maintain the current ratio of urban to rural representation.

The last presenter related the electoral representatives to the quality of education our children are receiving now and that they will receive in the future. A suggestion that, really, the two go hand in hand and that when we are talking about our future, there is a delicate balance.

There were other points made, of course. As I mentioned in the past meeting, we do have all the information. Everything is recorded, and all of the information is on our computer system. So when we do sit down to begin to try to formulate our conclusions, we'll be able to draw not only from the 10 briefs

which have been presented here in Hanna today but the more than 200 that were presented prior to this point in time, and we still have some to go.

So I only reiterate what other members of the committee have said in thanking you for coming out a second time. That's quite an extra effort you've made in order to have your views known. We all are very appreciative of how sensitive you are. You've gone through redistribution; you know better than any other part

of the province what it's like to lose a riding and the special trauma an area goes through. So we knew there'd be a great interest in this area. You certainly didn't disappoint us in that, either in your numbers or in the quality of your briefs. So thank you for coming out and being with us today.

[The committee adjourned at 2:17 p.m.]