

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[4 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm pleased to call to order the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries meeting being held here in Waskatenau today, with a welcome to those of you who have come out to be with us and to make presentations. We started this morning over in Barrhead. There was quite a heavy fog in that area. We weren't sure if that would hinder our ability to get here in time for our meeting or not. Yesterday we were in Hanna, and we were scheduled to be in Wainwright later in the day. Because of the very heavy fog in the Hanna area, a number of members who were going to fly in from an 8 o'clock meeting in Calgary had to change plans and drive in. So we were quite late starting, and we had to postpone the meeting scheduled for Wainwright later in the day. So that's one community that we'll have to go back to.

I would like to begin by introducing the members of the committee who are here today. Starting on my immediate left is Frank Bruseker. Frank is a Liberal member of the Assembly, and he represents the constituency of Calgary-North West. On my immediate right, another Calgarian, Pat Black, a Conservative member who represents Calgary-Foothills. To the right of Pat is Tom Sigurdson. Tom is a New Democratic member of the Assembly and represents Edmonton-Belmont. My name is Bob Bogle, and I'm from Taber-Warner.

We have several other members of the Assembly who serve on the committee. Stockwell Day, who's the MLA for Red Deer-North and is the government Whip, is not able to be with us today because of some cabinet discussions re the opening of the session. Pam Barrett is a New Democratic member for Edmonton-Highlands. Pam serves as the House leader for the New Democrats, and she's involved in preparations for the opening as well. And Mike Cardinal; Mike is a Conservative member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. Mike had an important meeting today, one of the follow-up meetings to the decision of last week regarding the mill.

I'm also pleased that we have Vivian and Ted with us from *Hansard*. If you see the microphones at the front, they're not intended to intimidate, but because this is a select special committee of the Legislature, everything said is recorded, and there is a written *Hansard*. You were asked to sign your name and give your address when you came in. That's so we can send you a copy of our final report, and if anyone wanted either a copy of the proceedings here in Waskatenau or other proceedings, you'd be able to obtain them because there's a record kept of all of the information. So for that reason we have to have the microphones.

On the other hand, in order to keep the meetings as informal and as flexible as possible, we've tried to ensure that presenters are comfortable and that all those present are. The process we've followed is that we'll start with Brian, for instance, who'll give us the first brief. He has a choice. He can either paraphrase what's in the brief, and we'll read the brief into the record at a later time, or he can read the brief. It's entirely the option of each presenter. Once Brian finishes, then members of the committee will be given an opportunity to ask questions or make comment. Then we throw it open to the floor so that if any of you would like to add anything, ask a further question or take issue with a point that's been made, you have the opportunity to do that.

We also have Bob Pritchard, who's the senior administrator for the committee, and Robin Wortman, who's here someplace. We have a standard practice: when things go well, when all the

arrangements have been made and we're on time and so on, the four of us take credit for that as being skillful politicians. If there are any problems with the arrangements or anything goes astray, well, then we turn to Bob, who in turn turns to Robin, to find out why the mistake was made.

In any event, before we go into the presentations, we do have, first of all, a brief overview of why this committee was struck. Tom is going to give us the background on that and basically go through the British Columbia court case, the reason that we have a committee rather than a commission, which is actually out doing the creation of boundaries and the drawing of lines between boundaries at this time. After Tom's presentation Frank will lead us through the overheads to show you the basis upon which we began our work, and that was looking at an electors list and what impact that has on the 83 ridings across the province.

You know, this is a good point to stop and say – for those critics who say the hearing process is merely window dressing by the politicians, I want to give you a firm example of why that's not so. I think our third meeting was in Grande Prairie; we were in High Level and Peace River prior to that. At that meeting in Grande Prairie a suggestion was made by one of the participants that we look at using a total population base rather than an elector base, with the suggestion that because rural families tend to be a little larger than urban families, there may be some added advantage there, in terms of the weighting factor, for rural areas. Tom was very supportive of that concept. We went back, did some number-crunching, and we'll present those results to you today. It doesn't solve all the problems, but you can see what it actually does.

So I'd like to pause at this moment, turn to Tom, who'll give us the introduction, and then Frank will follow up with the slides.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, what normally would happen after every second election is that our legislation in Alberta calls for a commission to be established to review all of the boundaries that are currently in place. The last time that was done was after the 1982 general election, and a commission was struck in 1983 and 1984 to examine the boundaries then. The legislation that was passed in 1983 authorizing the work of the commission gave specific instructions. The instructions were that there would be 42 urban seats and no constituency in urban Alberta could have a population of greater than 25 percent off the average – urban population only. The rural configurations: the only instruction that was given to us by the legislation was that there would be 41 rural seats; there would not be any population basis for consideration. The commission redrew boundaries based on that information, and that's what we have currently today.

All provinces and, indeed, Canada go through redistribution from time to time. In British Columbia there was a commission established not too long ago, the Fisher commission, and they redrew the boundaries in British Columbia. In British Columbia we had a number of constituencies that were completely and very different from other constituencies. We had a low, I believe in Atlin, of under 6,000 voters and constituencies in the lower mainland of the province that had two members per constituency and had voter populations of well over 60,000 people. So the Fisher commission examined the boundaries, redrew the boundaries, and came up with a report increasing the number of constituencies. But also contained in that report, for

the first time in the province of British Columbia, was a variance that didn't permit population to be either 25 percent above the average or 25 percent below the average.

The government of British Columbia chose to ignore the report. It was at that time that Professor Dixon decided to challenge the government on the validity of the constituency boundaries and took the government of British Columbia to court asking that the government be forced to adopt the Fisher commission recommendations straightaway. Chief Justice McLachlin of the Supreme Court of British Columbia agreed with Professor Dixon and established the plus or minus 25 percent variance rule that we're looking at and advised the government that they must implement the boundaries right away. The government of British Columbia appealed that particular decision; they went before Justice Meredith. Justice Meredith agreed that the plus or minus 25 percent figure off the average would be acceptable but that the government would not have to impose the new boundaries straightaway. Justice Meredith was of the opinion that only the Legislature can give itself the appropriate time lines in which to implement new boundaries. So Justice Meredith held that there would be a permitted variance but that the government would have a period of time in which to get the boundaries in place. As of January 31 this year the British Columbia government has adopted the new boundaries, so every constituency within British Columbia is 25 percent above or below the average for the total province.

That's why we are now looking as a committee at recommendations that we will make to the commission, because what we must do is make sure that whatever recommendations come from the committee to the Legislature and then to the commission will, hopefully, withstand a Charter challenge, if there is a Charter challenge launched in our province.

Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Tom.

Any questions of Tom on the background? Okay.

Frank, let's go ahead with the slides.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. The slide presentation we want to go through is . . . The first part will be basically the same as the package of information which you have picked up at the door, which you maybe have seen earlier. Then the second half reflects what Mr. Bogle referred to earlier on, which is a similar package but based now upon population.

The first slide you see before you is a list of the total constituencies around the province. Currently there are 83 constituencies; they are simply numbered from 1 to 83. The number to the right is the number of eligible voters as of the last enumeration, which took place prior to the last general election, which was almost a year ago now.

The second slide shows you the 83 constituencies now ranked from the largest, based upon population, of Edmonton-Whitemud down to the smallest, based upon population, of Cardston. You'll notice Cardston has a little number 1 beside it. Cardston has a bit of an anomaly. There is the Blood Indian Reserve, and there are some 1,800 people on the Indian reserve who should and are eligible to vote but who chose not to be enumerated in the last enumeration. So that is a consideration in that number.

If you added all those numbers together, all of the eligible voters, you'd get a total of about one and a half million people. If you divide that by the 83, which is the 83 constituencies around the province, you'd get an average constituency number

of 18,600 voters per constituency. Now, if you add 25 percent to that or take 25 percent from that, you end up with an upper end of about 23,000 and a lower end of about 14,000, if we apply that plus or minus 25 percent, which Tom referred to as what's happened in British Columbia.

So if we go back to that second list again, you'll see that we've coloured some now with green. The ones that are coloured in green on this particular slide are all urban, and they are all over the 25 percent guideline; in other words, more than 23,000 voters. The ones that are coloured in pink are all rural. They are all below the minus 25 percent variation, and that means, in total number of voters, less than 14,000 voters per constituency. Showing that on the map of Alberta, you can see here that the map has quite a bit of pink colouration on it. Those are the constituencies which are below the minus 25 percent guideline. You see that they spread right across the province, north to south and east to west. Is Redwater-Andrew one of those? Yes, Redwater-Andrew is one of the ones that is coloured in pink; in other words, below 14,000.

This is the city of Calgary. You'll notice some constituencies coloured in green. Those are the over 25 percent; in other words, 23,000 voters or more. One of the things you'll notice with this one and the next one, which we'll put up right away here: in both cases it is the perimeter of the two larger cities where it's growing. In the centre, a pretty good handle on things and not too much change happening there, but out on the outer boundaries quite a bit of growth is occurring.

This is the city of Lethbridge. Currently it has two constituencies, and currently you'll notice it is uncoloured, indicating that it falls within the plus or minus 25 percent variation.

The city of Medicine Hat. You'll notice there's a bunch of lines. Those are poll divisions, but this is all one constituency currently, and it is over the 25 percent. I believe, in fact, it's the fourth largest constituency in the province by population.

Now, this is the city of Red Deer. Red Deer found itself last summer - and I don't believe you have this map in your package - in the position where it was too large, actually, for one constituency based upon population. So it needed to be split into two, which created a dilemma for the commission at the time because there were not sufficient people to justify two constituencies. The result which occurred was what you see before you. The black line is actually Red Deer county. The brown line inside is the city of Red Deer boundary. Red Deer was split into a north and a south. In order to get sufficient numbers, it includes all of the city of Red Deer but also some of the county around it. So it has both urban and rural sectors in it to bring the populations up to being large enough to justify two separate constituencies.

This is the city of St. Albert, again quite a large constituency just to the north and west of the city of Edmonton and again coloured in green, so it's over the 25 percent guideline.

This map is one that you will find in your package. The purple colouration indicates those constituencies which have populations that are more than 35 percent below the provincial average of 18,000. In terms of numbers it means that these constituencies have 12,000 voters or less per constituency. Then there were a couple we noticed that were quite small; in fact, they were more than 50 percent away. There are five of them here coloured in yellow. I believe this is the last page of your package or perhaps the second last page of your package, and it shows those constituencies of 10,000 voters or less.

The blue dots on this transparency show the locations where our committee has traveled on our traveling road show around

the province, and this is a list of all of the different places where we have been. I'll just make a note, as Mr. Bogle mentioned, that we didn't get to Wainwright, so we're going to have to find an alternative time to get to Wainwright. But we've been to all of the others, and you'll see that we've saved the best for last, coming to Waskatenau.

What we've tried to do - superimposing two maps on top of one another, you'll see the dots marking the locations where we have been and the purple colour indicating those areas which are very far away from the provincial average; in other words, those areas which could be impacted the most by any redistribution of boundaries. Now, all of that that I've just gone through is what you have in the package before you.

As Mr. Bogle mentioned, we talked earlier, though, about what would be the impact if we looked at population, which would include children - in other words, one to just under 18 years old - and people who can't vote or at least didn't vote the last time around. What about the landed immigrants who do not yet have Canadian citizenship and are not eligible to vote? We mentioned the Blood Indian Reserve. We might also include some Hutterite colonies that choose not to be enumerated and therefore aren't on the eligible voter lists. By looking at the total population and then doing the same kind of number-crunching as we just went through, we get a bit of a different picture.

Currently, based upon the most recent data we have, the population of Alberta is just under 2.4 million people. If you divide that by 83 constituencies, you get an average figure, as you can see, of about 28,500. If we then go to the plus or minus 25 percent calculation as we did before, that gives you an upper end of 35,000 total population and a lower end of about 21,000 total population. So it allows for a larger variance. There are some significant implications as we go through some future data.

Now, this transparency looks very similar to the one in your package. There are some highlighted in green and some highlighted in pink. The difference here is that on this one, if you counted them, there are 18 highlighted in green. On your package, using the eligible voters, there are 19 highlighted in green. On this one there are 22 highlighted in pink; on yours there are 24 highlighted in pink. What it means, basically, is this. On the package that you have, using eligible voters, 40 constituencies fall within the plus or minus 25 percent guideline. Using population, 43 constituencies fall within the plus or minus 25 percent guideline, suggesting that perhaps changes which need to be made or might be made would be less far reaching.

Showing it on the map, the thing that really stands out now, all of a sudden, is that you can see we have two rural constituencies highlighted in green. We've got Grande Prairie on the western side, and we have the constituency of Fort McMurray in the northeast corner of the province, both of which now actually exceed the plus 25 percent; in other words, more than 35,000 total population. Now, we still have some also coloured in pink, showing there are still quite a number that are below the minus 25 percent.

With the cities of Edmonton and Calgary you see we still have a number that are highlighted in green. This is the city of Calgary. We gain some; we lose some. The same thing with the next slide, which is the city of Edmonton. Again we gain some, we lose some, but there is a net improvement of one over the entire province.

This one is really quite significant. In the package that you have before you - and you might just want to turn to the one you have in your package for just a moment and compare it to

the one that's up here on the transparency. In your package the purple colour there and here is the same thing: it shows a 35 percent variation away from the mean; in other words, quite small in terms of population. In the package that you have before you, there are 16 constituencies that are more than 35 percent away from the average, using eligible voters. On this particular slide using the population, we have only 12 constituencies that are more than 35 percent away from the mean. So, in fact, it works out being a little closer overall using the total population.

On the map that you have in your package showing those that are more than 50 percent away, you'll notice there are five. On this particular one there is only one constituency that is more than 50 percent away from the average - in other words, less than 14,000 total population - and that's the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest way down in the southwest corner of the province.

Now, over the course of our hearings that we've had both before Christmas and since Christmas, we've had a total of 550 or thereabouts, including yourselves. With what we had this morning, we're probably close to 600 people that have attended different sessions around the province, with 209, up until this morning, in terms of the total number of presentations. So you can see that we've had quite a number of presentations from quite a number of people in quite a number of locations.

Now, I believe that's the last slide through that presentation. Does anybody have any questions? Anything that I didn't explain clearly enough or that I went over too quickly? Is there anything that's still unclear?

Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Just before we go back into the actual briefs, as you know, we are not drawing the lines between constituencies. The mandate of our committee is to report back to the Assembly recommending the parameters, the guidelines which we should give to a future Electoral Boundaries Commission. We're also looking at the makeup of the commission. This morning while we were in Barrhead, one group suggested that the commission should be chaired by a judge, should have the Chief Electoral Officer, should have trustees from the municipal districts and counties, as well as the Urban Municipalities Association, on it. You know, that's the kind of thing. So this is a good opportunity for us to get feedback from you through the briefs.

So, Bob, why don't we begin with the first three?

MR. PRITCHARD: All right. We have six people giving a presentation this afternoon. The first three I'd like to call up to sit here: Brian Brigden, who's already here; Mike Prodaniuk; and Pat Kroker.

MR. CHAIRMAN: While Mike and Pat are coming up, I welcome to our panel Steve Zarusky, the MLA for Redwater-Andrew, certainly no stranger to you nor to us. We do welcome you. It's been our practice in the past to include the MLA when we're in a constituency. Steve, if you have any questions you want to ask during the process, that's fine, and if you have some concluding comments you'd like to make at the end, you'll have that opportunity.

MR. ZARUSKY: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to be doing a presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fine. We'll hold that, and you can give it at the end then. Okay?

MR. ZARUSKY: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Brian, I think we'll start with you.

MR. BRIGDEN: Good afternoon, Chairman Bogle, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Brian Brigden. I am the mayor of Redwater, and I am presenting this brief on behalf of the council of the town of Redwater. Chairman Bogle gave us the option of reading it or paraphrasing it. I believe my brief is already paraphrased, so I think we'll just go to that option.

Rural and urban representation should remain equal. This would give neither group the greater balance of power in the Legislature.

Point two, rural constituencies are much larger and the MLA has more travel, requiring more time and expenses to deal with issues. To increase the already large areas would cause more hardship and less contact with rural residents and their MLA.

Point three, urban ridings are smaller, and although they contain more people, they are easier to handle for an MLA.

Four, in large spacious areas like Alberta and Saskatchewan population should not be the only criterion in setting the boundaries of the constituency. The size of the constituency should also be taken into account.

Five, the recent B.C. ruling should not have an overall influence on Alberta. Should the Alberta method of distribution be challenged in the courts, our arguments would have to be stated at that time.

We believe that to increase the number of seats in the Legislature is not the answer. There are enough at this time, and the additional expense of more seats is not warranted. To increase the Legislature with more urban seats would again distort equal representation between urban and rural. We believe that the Saskatchewan boundaries are set on a mix of size and population rather than population as the only criterion. This should be the same basis that is used in Alberta.

The number of local governments that rural MLAs have to deal with is large, as they include towns, villages, hospital boards, counties, and municipal districts and school boards in that area. For example, our Redwater-Andrew MLA has seven counties and MDs, 10 towns and villages, and numerous hospitals and educational boards that he has to meet with and assist with their problems in dealing with the government.

Next, the greatest number of cabinet ministers appears to come from the urban seats, which again gives the urban greater power in cabinet discussions. The needs of rural Alberta are vastly different from those of urban residents, and as rural MLAs cover a vast amount of territory, to increase their workload with a larger constituency would be unfair. We believe that rural Alberta should remain autonomous.

I wish to thank you, the commission, for holding a hearing in the Redwater-Andrew constituency and trust that our concerns will be taken into account in your final report. I believe we were one of the people who wrote you a letter asking you to come. I saw the different colour of blue on the dots up there. So we do appreciate that we had the opportunity. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Brian.

Any questions from the committee members? Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you very much, Your Worship.

With respect to the first recommendation, you talk about urban and rural representation remaining equal. We have increased urbanization in our province. It's not something that's unique to Alberta; it's happening worldwide. We've got rural depopulation and you propose to have equal representation. I'm wondering - currently Alberta is 60 percent urban, according to constituencies that are highlighted right now, and 40 percent rural. How long would you propose to keep equal representation if you have continued rural depopulation?

MR. BRIGDEN: A difficult question to answer, but I also would maybe come back with another question in a roundabout way. That would be that I believe our present government and every government since I've been around - and I've been around for quite a while; let's say since 1935 - has said that agriculture in Alberta is of primary importance, and I believe that if it's of primary importance, it should be given some credit. There's only one way to get credit in the Legislature, and that's by voting. That would be my answer. So until agriculture is no longer important to Alberta, then I would say I would like to see it equal.

MR. SIGURDSON: The second question I've got is that I want to ask you the difference, if you've got any opinion. If you've got a constituency - take Redwater-Andrew, which has a voter population of 12,500. The number of urban constituencies - you can pick any one you want - over 25,000 . . . You talk about travel time. What's the difference between a constituent having to travel a half hour to see his or her MLA as opposed to a constituent having to wait a half hour in a constituency office to see their MLA?

MR. BRIGDEN: Well, I'm just hoping every MLA travels half an hour to see every constituent he wants to see, first of all.

MR. SIGURDSON: No. I'm sorry. I reversed that. I had constituents traveling to constituency offices.

MR. BRIGDEN: Okay. So your question is: who should travel? Is that your question?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, that's not the question. An average appointment might be a half hour. This is using some pretty simplified mathematics, but if you've twice as many people in one constituency as opposed to another, a resident in a smaller constituency has to travel a half hour and in the larger constituency, in terms of voter population, a constituent has to wait a half hour. I'm just wondering if you see any difference.

MR. BRIGDEN: Since this is all hypothetical, I'll give you a situation. I do see a difference, and I see where you're coming from, but I'll go back to my point. I can't remember offhand which number it was, but I'll go back to our MLA having to see all the different types of government. Before I was involved in local politics or municipal politics or whatever you want to call it, I probably didn't have too many dealings with my local MLA. If I did, I had to wait a lot longer than half an hour, I can tell you, and I still have to wait a lot longer for half an hour, but Steve is quick. But my point is that when we're dealing on every issue . . . You're from Edmonton. How many MLAs are in Edmonton? Sixteen, 18, 20-something?

MR. SIGURDSON: I think there are 18.

MR. BRIGDEN: Okay, thank you. You have two school boards to deal with there. Our MLA has to deal with all the different problems through the Department of Education on every different school board. I just looked and saw three different school boards being represented today, never mind the towns and that. So that's where I say the workload is different. It's the grant procedures and everything else, and it's very difficult for a member to have to handle these things.

So I say there are special needs that have to be done for all rural Alberta, not just Redwater-Andrew. I only know Redwater-Andrew well, but I know enough that in every constituency – and the bigger they get, the more governments you're dealing with and everybody's grants and all that, and you people are well aware of the decisions you have to make. I'm afraid I'm well aware of the decisions I have to make, and I'm only one small government in the process in Redwater-Andrew, so there are many decisions that have to be made. I think we take a lot of our MLA's time and there are a lot of other people that have to take his time. I'm talking more on a government level, so I'm not sure, to be honest with you, how many local constituents ever get to have many meetings with their MLA on a regular basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. Thank you. Just one quick question, Brian, if I could ask you. You're suggesting we keep 42-41. Should we just leave everything as is then? Is that what you're recommending?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're referring to the mix within the 41.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I'm talking about the current boundaries. Currently we have 42 urban and 41 rural. Should we just leave the boundaries as they are, or do you see some need for some adjustment?

MR. BRIGDEN: There could be some need for some small adjustment. From my point of view, though, again – and right now I'm wearing blinders because I'm more worried about Redwater-Andrew than I am about Taber-Warner. But somebody might be worried about Taber-Warner up there; they're right behind Redwater-Andrew. Anyway, I can see some small shifts. What worries me about our particular constituency is that we are pretty close to the urban but Redwater-Andrew is basically a rural constituency, so for us to get blended in with St. Albert or Sturgeon, or if there are some mixtures there, I would have concerns about that. I'd rather we blend another way. But it has nothing to do with the people; it has to do with the needs.

So I guess my bottom line is: if the needs are warranted and it's going to help the 42-41 split, I'd be in favour of it, just as I'd be in favour of having some of the smaller cities . . . Since I hear a lot that it's our inner cities, either Calgary or Edmonton, that have the problems yet they have the lowest amount according to your figures, maybe we should have more constituencies from that area and we could solve the problem that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything else, Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: No. That's it. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat?

MRS. BLACK: No. That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone from the floor? Okay. Thanks, Brian.

Mike.

MR. PRODANIUK: Mr. Bogle, Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, my name is Mike Prodaniuk. I'm an elected councillor for the village of Thorhild. I choose to read my brief regarding electoral boundaries of Alberta.

As an elected councillor of the village of Thorhild, I strongly urge that our government maintain the present ratio of urban and rural MLAs. I, along with my colleagues, am well satisfied that the present ratio of distribution is fair and adequate to all Albertans. Representation by population is a very important consideration, but it is not the only consideration that should be taken into account.

It is a political right of all Albertans to have reasonable contact with their MLA, and it is an obligation of the MLA to have reasonable contact with his electors. Although the present system does not offer the same ease of contact for rural electors as that of urban, we are not complaining. We think our rural MLA is doing an exceptionally good job considering the circumstances, but please do not make it any harder for him by expanding the boundaries. Our Redwater-Andrew member must cover approximately 2,000 square miles to be in contact with his entire electorate, as compared to the case of Edmonton, with approximately seven square miles. He must keep in touch with seven counties and MDs, 11 towns and villages, seven school boards, four hospital boards, and numerous community associations. If his job were made any harder by expanding the boundaries, our representation in the Legislature would surely suffer.

The other alternative that has been suggested by certain individuals is to leave the rural boundaries as they are and to increase the membership of Edmonton and Calgary by 18 seats. This concept would leave the rural boundaries as they are, but what would it do to the rural representation of our Legislature? Increasing the number of seats in Edmonton and Calgary by 18 would increase the House to 101 seats. Not only could this increase the annual operating cost of the Legislature by possibly 1 and one-half million dollars; it would also give Edmonton and Calgary an accumulated representation of 53 seats. Two cities which share a close commonality of interest in the province of Alberta would have absolute control of the entire province – as, for example, Ontario and Quebec within the Parliament of Canada. This would be absolutely devastating not only to rural representation but for the entire province of Alberta.

Rural Alberta needs urban input. Urban Alberta needs rural input. This balance is very necessary for the thriving economy. We have the balance now with the present distribution ratio. Do not upset it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Mike.

Any questions from the committee? Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mike, thank you for your presentation. It was very clear. I only have one question. Are you suggesting then, Mike, that we have in fact a two tiered system within the province for electoral boundaries, one system that would apply to rural and one that would apply to urban settings?

MR. PRODANIUK: I'll answer that with a question and with possibly an example to you. We have the same system in our Dominion Parliament, and we're living with it and complaining about it. Have we not?

MRS. BLACK: Very much so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?
Thanks very much, Mike.
Pat.

MRS. KROKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Pat Kroker. I'm the chairman of the county of Lamont school board, and I'm speaking on behalf of that board. My brief is brief, so I'll read it.

I would like to express my appreciation to you and the members of your committee for allowing us to present our position with respect to the electoral boundaries legislation. To set electoral boundaries based solely on population may at first thought seem fair. However, if one ponders it a while, one would really have to question the fairness of that position. If there is an inequity of representation by population, in our opinion there would be a far greater inequity if the setting of electoral boundaries were to be based on this factor alone. Alberta is a large and diverse province with the majority of people located in the two large urban centres. If we are at all concerned about the growth and development of rural Alberta - and surely we must be - rural Alberta must have a strong voice in the Legislative Assembly. If the number of urban representatives increases while the number of rural representatives decreases, rural Alberta will be left with very little clout.

We feel that a number of factors should be taken into consideration when deciding where the electoral boundaries should be. We suggest that geographic area and the number of rural constituencies within a constituency should be taken into consideration as well as the population. Many rural constituencies incorporate many different municipalities and hospital and school districts. Redwater-Andrew is one of these. At present there are seven counties or portions thereof, 10 towns and villages, six school boards, and six hospital districts. To hear everyone's concerns and to accommodate the needs of every jurisdiction requires an intense meeting schedule. To accommodate them on an equal basis is virtually impossible. In an urban constituency a voter may visit his representative by walking a few blocks to the constituency office, while in the rural constituency a person may have to travel many miles to voice his or her concerns to his or her representative.

Mr. Chairman, we feel that reducing the number of rural constituencies will most definitely have a negative impact on rural Alberta and its growth and development. Therefore, we ask that the above factors be taken into consideration when making your recommendations to the Legislature. We rely on your fairness to all Albertans. We thank you for your time and attention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pat.
Questions? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Pat, would you think it would be fair if party A got more votes than party B in an election and party B formed the government?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're talking about total votes cast by all

the people.

MR. SIGURDSON: Total votes cast by all the people.

MRS. KROKER: Well, I've never thought about it, because that's not the way it is. The person that gets the most votes wins.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. I want to show you an example of the inequity we've got currently. I'm going to use Pat's constituency and three constituencies in the south. If one candidate in an urban centre were to receive 100 percent of the votes, just for an example - everybody liked that candidate, and they got 29,000 votes - and then in the other three constituencies in the south the candidates all got 75 percent of the votes, yet all those 75 percents together wouldn't amount to the number of votes one candidate had. So one candidate or one party may have more votes, but only one candidate would be elected, whereas because of the numbers in some of the other constituencies, there would be three other people elected. Do you think that would be fair?

MRS. KROKER: Well, I guess basically we are asking you to consider the geographic area and the number of municipalities and school boards, et cetera, in each jurisdiction. I don't know a lot about politics. I have never been involved much except on the school board. I feel that sometimes there is inequity between the type and quality of education an urban student can access in comparison to a rural student. My concern here today is just with education and students, and I often think about fairness in regard to that. I think maybe you recall when Nancy Betkowski talked about corporate pooling; they would take that money and distribute it across the province more fairly so all children could have access to good education, to the type of education they need. Why would you think that nobody would go along with that? I'm sure that most of rural Alberta supported that, but I understand they couldn't accept that in the Legislature. I don't really understand why, except possibly all the bigger centres had a louder voice, lobbied harder to their MLAs, and there are more MLAs in the large urban centres.

What else was I going to say on that? Oh, on the tax. Now, is it fair that somebody in rural Alberta . . . You probably know the per pupil assessments far better than I do, but I did see some literature quite some time ago when they were talking about corporate pooling. They showed jurisdictions with \$4,000 per pupil assessment, and they showed us other jurisdictions that had \$400,000 per pupil assessment. To me that's not fair. Because this year government's given the school boards a 3.5 percent increase - right? - and school board settlements across the province are coming in at 5 percent. Our rural teachers I think will hardly settle for anything less than 5, so we in the rural area are all going to have to go back to our constituents and ask them to pay that difference to their supplementary requisition. Now, we're from a rural constituency. We have no industry. We're hoping to get some, but even still it won't compare with what some of the others have as far as assessment goes. The only way we can raise the dollars for education for our children is by going to the local resident taxpayer and our few businesses that are struggling.

To me, if we in Alberta do not look after the education of our children, where are we going to be? If you want development in rural Alberta, you know, people to move out there and live out there, you have to be able to provide education for the

children, but who's going to pay for it? I know that as a government you can only spend so much money too; you can only give an increase of so many dollars in your grants. I appreciate that because I know we have to start looking after our money, but please let's look after our children too. Let's see that everybody gets a good education, not only those in the large urban centres that can afford it. I guess when you talk about fairness, that's all I can think of.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: No, that's fine. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Thanks very much, Pat.

MRS. KROKER: Thanks.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could have the next three presenters come up, please: Steve Leskiw, Jim Coswan, and Bill Kostiw.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Steve, we'll start with you, please.

MR. LESKIW: Yes. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee. My name is Steve Leskiw. I've come here as a private citizen. I'm a school teacher, and I work down the road in Smoky Lake, where I also live. Over the years I've sort of established a reputation of being one of those people who tend to swim upriver while everyone else is floating down. This is no exception.

I'd like to say that judging by what I have been reading in the newspapers, the local papers and the *Edmonton Journal*, it would seem that rural MLAs have done a fairly good job of recruiting supporters to help sing what I would call the song of the overworked rural MLA and the underrepresented constituent. As an educator I am accountable for what I teach in my classroom, yet much of what I'm reading in the paper goes against what I am expected to teach. The prescribed textbooks in this province tell our children that the fundamental principle of democracy is one person, one vote. It is this principle that gives the poor man political equality with the rich man, the farmer equality with the lawyer. Political equality, ladies and gentlemen, is the very essence of a true democracy. In an ideal democracy, if that existed, all eligible voters would rule on all matters. From one end of this province to the other Albertans would vote on each and every matter that required a political decision. Reality, however, teaches us that, if my memory serves me right, as your meeting with two people in - was it Peace River?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. LESKIW: Or two presenters in Peace River . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, to be clear, our very first meeting was in High Level.

MR. LESKIW: . . . or High Level.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The notices had gone out a few days prior to the meeting, and for that reason. And that was the explanation of the mayor.

MR. LESKIW: Okay, then I won't use it as an example.

In reality life tells us that Albertans often have little time, have even less interest, and probably lack information to make sound judgments on all issues. As a result, our society and the societies in other countries as well have devised a more practical means of practising democracy called representative democracy. We elect representatives. We elect people like yourselves, who should take the time, make the interest, and study each issue before making a final decision. While we often have ample reason to question the abilities of some of our elected representatives, the system does work, and it is certainly a lot better than what the other half of the world has to live with.

According to our texts, representative democracy has some eight essential features, the most important being representation by population, to preserve the equality of the poor man's vote, to make sure that the lawyer's vote is no greater than the farmer's. Each representative should work on behalf of the same number of eligible voters. While it has never been an exact science, representation by population does preserve the concept of political equality and should be defended. Yes, political equality has its consequences for those of us living in rural Alberta, but then what doesn't? Yes, rural Albertans will have to accept the reality that we are no longer the majority, and that this will translate into fewer seats in the Legislature.

However, ladies and gentlemen, I have always been a firm believer in quality before quantity. The voice we in rural Alberta have in the Legislature depends far more on the personal strengths of our MLAs than on their physical numbers. I have little sympathy for our overworked and underpaid rural MLAs. If they are having difficulties meeting their constituency obligations, they might ask the government to consider the appointment of constituency assistants. Or, quite frankly, they might look for another line of work that is less demanding. Changing the principles of democracy to make life easier for our rural MLAs is not the answer.

You, ladies and gentlemen, have been assigned a very important responsibility. For some time now the government of this province has turned a blind eye to political inequality. That smacks of the type of political mentality that one might find in a Central American banana republic. In light of what is happening in eastern Europe, I would strongly urge that your final recommendation be in the best interests of democracy. If you fail to do so, Mr. Dinning should have one more line added to our textbooks. That sentence should read, "In Alberta the principles of democracy are upheld only when it is convenient to do so." Our schoolchildren are counting on you. Democracy is counting on you.

I thank you for your time and for your attention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions?
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. Thank you, Steve. I appreciate your presentation. I understand you're talking about rep by population. I'm wondering if you would comment about the British Columbia decision wherein Madam Justice McLachlin referred to a 25 percent variation. You didn't really address that number, and I wondered if you had considered that at all. Do you think 25 percent is appropriate, too high, or too low? What's your feeling on that?

MR. LESKIW: Okay. Ideally - and you know, we all do this; we have ideals, and we have things that we believe in - the 25 percent should not be there. As much as possible our redistribu-

tion of our boundaries should represent the population. However, in terms of the 25 percent, I think that the 25 percent is probably a figure that most Albertans would be prepared to live with, plus or minus. Even myself, I would probably be prepared to agree with that.

MR. BRUSEKER: But are you suggesting, or would you prefer then a narrower – for example, Manitoba . . .

MR. LESKIW: I would prefer a narrower discrepancy between the number of voters in each constituency. Definitely. That would be preferable.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. For example – I was just going to raise the issue – Manitoba has a plus or minus 10 percent variation. I wondered how you might feel about that. Or are you suggesting as close to zero?

MR. LESKIW: Yeah, I would prefer zero, okay? So 10 is closer to zero.

MR. BRUSEKER: All right. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, that's fine. That was my question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat, anything?

MRS. BLACK: I was wondering, Steve. You said you were a teacher.

MR. LESKIW: Yes.

MRS. BLACK: So you would be prepared to have representation by population defined with a variance in place.

MR. LESKIW: Ideally, I would prefer to have representation by population followed to the letter. Realistically, I believe that there have to be variances and/or alternatives to the variances. That's why I suggested that perhaps in this province we might look at the possibility, in large rural ridings, of providing our MLAs with specified constituency assistants, and I would go so far as to say that in a riding where you have a male MLA, one or more of those assistants should be female. These people would in turn be empowered to attend meetings on behalf of the MLA and work in conjunction with that MLA, if the government saw fit to do something like that.

Another alternative that you might consider. We've read about the inequalities between urban and rural areas and the fact that urban areas would dominate in the Legislature. You might consider structuring the perimeter constituencies of the cities so they include a balance of both urban and rural voters. Your central seats would be totally urban, but your perimeter seats would have MLAs who would have to represent both the urban population and the rural population if in fact they wanted to remain in office. Just a suggestion that I . . .

MRS. BLACK: Could you do one more thing for me, Steve?

MR. LESKIW: Yes.

MRS. BLACK: How do you define an MLA? What is your

definition of a representative?

MR. LESKIW: What do you mean by definition of a representative? Okay. A representative is someone who has been nominated on behalf of their party and who has been chosen by the constituents in that constituency to work on their behalf for the term of office. I'm not sure what you want other than that.

MRS. BLACK: That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

Just one other comment, Steve. You mentioned High Level and the fact that there were two people out. I'm not sure what relevance that has. We had a hearing in Calgary where there were two people, as well. I don't judge the success of a meeting on the number of people. We did get a couple of good briefs when we were in High Level, but we also received two good briefs when we were in Calgary when there were two people out.

Anyone else with a question? Moving on, then. Jim, please.

MR. COSWAN: Chairman Bogle, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Jim Coswan, and I am the mayor of the village of Waskatenau. I think most of the points I was going to make have been covered, especially by my colleague from the town of Redwater. However, I would like to talk about our particular constituency as it relates to Redwater-Andrew.

We are among the largest constituencies in terms of the total square miles that our MLA has to cover. We have two municipal districts, four counties, 10 towns and villages, and as someone mentioned, five or six hospital boards. We also have a very diverse population. We have grain farming, we have oil, we have forestry, and we have some manufacturing. It's my opinion that if we increase the size of our constituencies, our rural representatives will not have any or very little personal contact with our MLAs. Personal contact right at the present time is important in terms of our ability to survive. I think Tom mentioned that we have a shift in population to urban areas from rural, and this is very true. We have a way of life in the rural areas that I think we should try to maintain. We have a quality of life here, and be that what it may, I think it should be maintained at all costs.

These are just the points that I would like to make, and I thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Jim.

Questions? Okay. Anyone else? Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Jim, I'm going to ask you . . . You're the mayor of this town that we're in, and thank you very much for being so hospitable to us. What do you think of the idea – it's come up a couple of times before today and again today – of having the government pay for assistants to come out and take over some of the responsibilities of the MLA?

MR. COSWAN: I think I would have to agree with you on those terms or whoever had suggested that. I believe that there is some merit to that particular fact. If you can't contact your MLA, I believe that – I think Steve mentioned the word "assistant," and I think there may be merit in that, because it's certainly important that we have contact with our elected representatives.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I, too, want to thank you for your presentation, Your Worship. In one of our earlier committee meetings – I think it was in Donnelly – a member of the Legislature said that one of the things that he regretted most was that he didn't have as much time to spend with his constituents as he might like because he was spending so much time with his town councils. I think he had cited that he had some 64 elected individuals that he spent a great deal of time with. I guess I want to put it to you that my response was, "Gosh, there are times when I wish my constituents had 64 individuals to call before they got to me, because as a provincial politician in an urban centre they seem to call me first because there are only two other aldermen or there's nobody on the hospital board that they can really get at."

So when problems arise here, the problems that come to you, are you able to pretty much sort out the municipal problems before you pass on anything to your MLA that might be of a provincial nature?

MR. COSWAN: Yes, I think we can solve most of our problems locally, but I believe that the other side of the coin is that we should be able to meet with our MLA. In my estimation I think we should be able to meet with him at least every two months, at least six times a year, just to meet and discuss things that we feel are concerns to the village.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah. I'm not disputing that at all. I guess the only concern that I've got is, again, you represent X number of people, and you try and meet with your MLA once every couple of months, and your constituents have access to you. You live here. Whereas in Edmonton in my constituency we share two aldermen amongst three or four other constituencies. So political individuals, elected officials, are fewer and farther between than what they are out here, and some of the problems that are equally as important, whether you've got a problem with input costs or whether you've got a problem with a rent increase, have to be solved. So I'm trying to find out where that level of fairness is. I think everybody wants to have access to their MLA. That's the common thing that I've found amongst all Albertans. They don't really want to deal with their MLAs via a telephone or a fax machine; they'd much prefer to see them face-to-face.

MR. COSWAN: I'm sorry, Tom, I misunderstood the question. I don't know what the answer is. I don't want to put the knock on urban politicians either, and I suppose maybe you are very busy. I know myself that when I lived in the city, and I lived there for many years, I had no contact at all with our local MLA. As a matter of fact, I will rephrase that and say none whatsoever. I don't know if the needs are just as great in an urban area as they are in a rural area. I guess maybe that's all I'm trying to say. Perhaps they are, and you're a better judge of that than I am.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, anyone else?
Steve.

MR. ZARUSKY: Bob, can I make a comment? I guess the presentations have been good so far, and one thing that's come

up is the suggestion of an assistant, or a few assistants. Well, I think I should remind people that in Redwater-Andrew we have three constituency offices that are staffed part of the time; one is staffed full-time. In the Legislature we've got one secretary plus in my other duties I've got another few secretaries and, in fact, an assistant. Now, many of you here have called my secretaries and – I'm sure my other colleagues here will verify this – the secretary can just do so much, or the assistant can give me some information, but the people still want contact with their elected official, because it's only one person who is elected, and that's the trust that people put into this one person.

Now, when these people phone an office, maybe if it's in regard to grant information or whatever, the secretary can give it and does give it. Or in regards to helping some seniors fill out a pension form or home assistance improvement form, the secretaries do all this. But there are a lot of people who have some very confidential issues they want to discuss, they want to discuss it just with one person, and this is where the demands come on a rural MLA. In rural Alberta you've got much more contact with your elected person, because being born in rural Alberta, I know what it's like. You know the majority of your neighbours, and you know the movers and shakers in every community, who are people like yourselves here today.

I think we can hire and appoint all the assistants we want. In my case I've got, I'd say, four or maybe five of them right now, but they still can't do the job of the elected person. This is what some of the problems are: people want personal contact.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Steve. Anyone else?

Okay, moving on. Bill, I understand you're making a presentation and Julian will supplement. Right?

MR. KOSTIW: Yes. Mr. Chairman, members of the special committee on electoral boundaries, first of all, I'd like to introduce some people who are with us. Julian Topolnisky is the school superintendent for the county of Thorhild. Lyle Kuzik is the board chairman for the board of education and for the agricultural service board, and Karen Dowhaniuk is the controller for all of the function in the county. The people of the county of Thorhild region are pleased to be able to present our concerns to this committee. We appreciate the extra commitment you, the board members, must make to hold hearings in outlying areas and spend your evenings and time in doing a public service.

Basically, our concern today is the one factor, and that's looking at the equity of population versus physical area and suggesting that that must be retained and incorporated into whatever decision is made. Rural MLAs have many more functions, both political and socially, to attend, I suppose, not by population but by past practice or prior demand. They have to deal with a much larger geographic basis. The attendance at local municipal schools, recreation, ag societies, and social functions is very important to all MLAs, both rural and urban. I think there's a greater demand, certainly, put on the rural people.

At the rural level each MLA could represent as many as 20 municipal groups or boards, whereas the urban MLAs may share one city council or one school board. The urban MLAs can walk their constituency in a day, whereas the rural MLAs are hard-pressed to drive it in a day. The need for strong rural constituencies is imperative because of the developing nature of Alberta. The province of Alberta is resource and agriculture driven, and the roots for both are in rural Alberta.

In summary, we accept that change may be necessary to realign boundaries, but a major shift to increase the percentage of urban MLAs would paralyze rural Alberta. Our people feel that this equity factor is very important to maintain fair representation to all of Alberta and give our people the opportunity to progress and prosper on an equitable basis, I guess.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Julian, do you want to supplement now?

MR. TOPOLNISKY: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Questions? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just for clarification, then, you're arguing that population becomes the paramount consideration but that there be a 25 to 30 percent variance?

MR. KOSTIW: Yes. We're saying there has to be some factor maintained in that, some difference of 25 or whatever the number may be. But some difference has to be maintained, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. The exact words I wrote down were "equity of population and physical area." I think that's exactly what you said.

MR. KOSTIW: Yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: It says "versus" here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

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

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just one quick question. You didn't address it, and I was wondering if you discussed it at all. How do you feel about the total number of MLAs we currently have being 83? Is that an appropriate number, do you feel? Too high? Too low?

MR. KOSTIW: Yes. Our council did discuss that briefly, and we think there are enough MLAs. One or two one way or the other wouldn't affect it, but we think somewhere in that 83 is good.

I guess the other statement we would make is that if we look back historically, we sometimes suffer from the east syndrome, and somebody else pointed it out: Ontario and Quebec kind of dominate the west, and the south dominates the north to some degree, or the big cities dominate the rural areas. I guess maybe that's something we have to live with. As Steve pointed out in his, there has to be representation by population, but I think there have to be many other things considered, and I imagine that's what you people are doing. I think the urban MLAs have much stronger bureaucrat support. I mean, there are lots of people in the system who can be contacted or they can go to see. If you live in Edmonton, you can go down to the parliament buildings or go down to one of the major government offices and see an ADM or a deputy minister. In the country we certainly have access to all kinds of people, but we rarely get somebody with that stature out into the community. There's a regional person who will come out and visit us, but we rarely

have the contact that the urban people could have on a daily basis almost. Again the number of people has to be considered.

I think the other thing is the significant amount of traveling time that the rural people have to do to get to the Legislature. I think that has a tremendously different effect. The urban guys can walk down to the parliament buildings or fly in on a timely basis, whereas for some of the urban people there are no airports and no convenient way to get there. So there are some very significant factors that would have to be considered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Bill.

Anyone else? Any other questions? Yes, Julian.

MR. TOPOLNISKY: As a supplement, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the board of education of the county of Thorhild, I think what has been indicated earlier by the chairman of the county of Lamont also would be echoed by our board. However, the thing that was not addressed is: what does "fair" really mean? Are we talking fair as to elected people or fair to services to students and/or constituents? I think when we talk about corporate pooling, et cetera, that issue has to be addressed, and as the chairman of the board of education for the county of Lamont has already indicated, the issue was not addressed simply because of the larger jurisdictions and the more wealthy ones, in fact, dictating to the jurisdictions outside the large urban areas as to what they are going to do with their money. I think this is all part of the same principle.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Anyone else?

MR. SIGURDSON: Can I just comment on that one? I just want to advise you that that's the second time we've heard that raised now. What happened with the corporate pooling issue was that the matter was withdrawn from the Legislature by the government, and inside that government caucus there were more rural MLAs than there were urban MLAs. So I think the argument doesn't hold all that well. The government caucus chose, for a variety of reasons, to withdraw that funding formula, and at that time there were more rural government MLAs than there were urban government MLAs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, while we should not get into the corporate pooling question . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . it's important for everyone to recognize - and I think Pat made reference to the range between what might be called the very rich boards and the very poor boards - that while the urban boards tend to be in the more well-off category, several rural boards are also very rich because of some of the intense industrial activity located in their areas.

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, indeed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it, like many other issues, boiled down to those who had a great deal of assessment not wishing to share it with those who did not.

Okay. Anyone else? Any other questions? Thanks very much, gentlemen.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could have the next three presenters

come up: Alex Bochanesky, Fred Pewarchuk, and Ed Stelmach.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Ed, we'll start with you.

MR. STELMACH: Thanks, Chairman Bob. I'd like to preface our presentation, Mr. Chairman, by saying that we did make a presentation in St. Paul. However, we've added somewhat to the original presentation, and there is also the fact that both yourself and Pat Black weren't in St. Paul, so we'll go through the presentation.

I'd like to thank you, Chairman Bob and members of the committee, for allowing us to present our position with respect to the electoral boundaries legislation. In the county of Lamont we acknowledge that representation by population has been historically recognized as allowing everyone equal representation in government. However, I wish to question the fairness of that position and indicate areas where that representation is not always fair.

In an urban constituency a voter may access his MLA by walking a short distance to the constituency office, and that point has been made numerous times today. In some of the rural constituencies a person has to travel many miles to meet with his representative. Therefore, increasing the boundary of a rural constituency to increase the number of voters within that constituency is not fair to the electors in that area, as accessibility will be compromised.

We must also be mindful of the fact that many of the rural constituencies incorporate many different municipalities, hospital and school districts. These are the boards that make contact with the MLAs and convey to them the specific needs of their constituents. The Redwater-Andrew constituency is one of these. For instance, presently there are six counties or portions thereof: Lamont, Two Hills, Smoky Lake, Thorhild, Sturgeon, and Strathcona; 10 towns and villages: Willingdon, Andrew, Lamont, Bruderheim, Redwater, Thorhild, Waskatenau, Warspite, Radway, and Smoky Lake - it takes a while just to read them out, let alone visit them in one year - six school boards: Two Hills, Lamont, Strathcona, Smoky Lake, Thorhild, Sturgeon; six hospital districts: Lamont, Two Hills, Redwater, Radway, Thorhild, Smoky Lake, Vilna; and three health units: Vegreville, Sturgeon, and Northeastern.

To hear every jurisdiction's concerns and needs requires a truly intense meeting schedule of an MLA. Furthermore, to accommodate all the needs of every jurisdiction on an equal basis is virtually impossible, especially if we tend to share programs - that is, road improvements, school construction, hospital construction - on a dollar basis per constituency.

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

Some of the rural divisions presently have an urban flavour to them and therefore are not as rural as we may think they are. The Vegreville constituency is one example. The town of Vegreville, 4,000 voters, and the town of Tofield, 800 voters, as

well as the surrounding acreage developments, fall within the boundaries of the constituency of 12,167 voters. I'm sure there are other examples of similar situations in the province.

I'd like to also comment further that rural Alberta built this province. Our pioneers sacrificed health and family life to help make this province what it is, a province in which we enjoy so many amenities, well before oil and gas came about. I would suggest, then, and ask that this committee not forget those, their input, and not leave rural Alberta without any representation.

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

The last presentation we made didn't give any of our recommendations. Today I'd like to suggest that in the county of Lamont we've discussed it, and basically there are two scenarios: leave the number of seats as they are for the time being and allow rural Alberta an opportunity to build further; or leave the rural seats as they are and increase the urban seats, but not substantially. We're looking at not more than three to four extra constituencies in the Legislature. Other than that, that concludes our presentation, and I'm certainly open to questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ed.

Questions? Anyone else? Yes, Ed.

MR. STELMACH: If I might make a further comment. There was a comment made earlier on appointing assistants to represent an elected . . . I'd like to submit to this committee that that perhaps takes us further away from the true meaning of democracy than discrepancy in the number of voters in the constituency. In fact, I am somewhat disappointed. I think many of you here in this room know that the dangers to democracy were never from outside this country; they were always from within. I think equal representation is important, but that representation must be fair.

I'd like to thank you for allowing rural Alberta to approach this committee and state our position. However, I've noticed, especially in the print media, that so many comments have been made by individual members of this committee well before the hearings have been concluded. Perhaps that's a little unfair, to prejudice this particular process until such time as the hearings have officially been concluded, and then individual members may make their feelings known to the public.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ed. As a committee we have not discussed any of the recommendations that have come in. In fact, we've gone on record on numerous occasions to state that it would be improper as a committee to draw conclusions before we had heard from all those who wished to give us advice through the hearing process.

MR. STELMACH: Well, I know that some comments were made as to possible increases in urban constituencies and what they should be. I have the proof here. That's not an issue today, but I would suggest that we wait till the hearings are concluded so that we . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, and I think the specific matter you're

referring to is a newspaper article which we are dealing with at an emergency special meeting tomorrow evening.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Anyone from the committee? Thanks very much, Ed.
Fred.

MR. PEWARCHUK: Mr. Chairman, members of the select special committee, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Fred Pewarchuk. I'm the president of the Redwater-Andrew PC Association. Some of these views that I'm going to present are not necessarily the association's views; they're my own.

We in the Redwater-Andrew constituency are very concerned about the proposed constituency boundary changes, because if there are changes, we all know that what's going to happen is that some of the rural constituencies will get larger and some will disappear completely. It is important that we concern ourselves with what the MLAs are involved with in rural constituencies as opposed to those in urban settings.

In the urban settings the MLAs can jointly lobby for major improvements; for example, hospitals, schools, arenas that they seem to have. A larger number can lobby for such things, whereas in a rural constituency one MLA must attend to all these deeds alone, be it hospitals, roads, schools. At present our MLA has to deal with approximately 50 councillors from 10 towns and villages and approximately 40 councillors from six counties and municipalities. In this constituency our MLA deals not only with close to 100 elected officials, but he also has to attend to the many requests put to him by different organizations and individuals and such, whereas in the urban ridings we feel there are - my numbers may not be exactly right - 39 MLAs who deal with approximately 50 to 60 elected people.

One person, one vote is a good figure to be striving for, but we have to take a serious look at the large rural constituencies. We must remember that the rural MLAs must also cope with roads, environment problems, as well as drainage. The urban MLAs don't seem to have a lot of these problems, so the rural MLA really has his work cut out for him.

It's not fair to say that the rural people are overrepresented, because I think there is much overlap in urban constituencies, as I mentioned earlier. The urban constituencies have a total of 39 MLAs, and if some formula can be worked out as to how many demands in an urban setting are overlapped by more than one MLA, then we would find that probably the urban people are represented on a one vote, one person ratio as has been mentioned earlier.

The rural MLAs - this was mentioned earlier - have much more involvement with their constituents. Everybody in the riding knows them. This could be at a birthday party, an anniversary, or anything. They phone the MLA: "Would you come out and see us? Would you attend?" So, as a result, the distances they travel are very great.

I don't have any firm solutions for this problem. As we all know, we already have the highest government per capita in Canada, and surely we don't want to increase that number. But if we have to increase the number, I'll suggest that we add one seat, making a total of 84; then split the numbers equally between urban and rural; possibly add the new riding in an urban centre; and maybe take some of the rural ridings that are close to the urban borders and have the rural ridings be a combination and pick up some of the urban constituents. Then

we would have probably an equal number: 42 in the urban situations and 42 in the rural.

I would like to thank you for the time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Any questions? From the floor?

MRS. BLACK: Could I just ask one?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, go ahead, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Fred, earlier we heard about representation by population. Do you definitely feel, then, that there have to be other factors that are brought into place along with that representation by population?

MR. PEWARCHUK: Yes, I think so.

MRS. BLACK: And should that be on a two tiered system, one for urban and one for rural, or provincewide?

MR. PEWARCHUK: I think probably provincewide should be looked at. You know, there are so many different situations that you can get involved in.

MRS. BLACK: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?
Thank you, Fred.
Alex.

MR. BOCHANESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the special committee. I'm a councillor of the MD of Sturgeon. The MD of Sturgeon has handed in their brief to this committee, so I will not be presenting a brief on behalf of the MD of Sturgeon. The MD's stand is: leave all electoral boundaries as they are. That was unanimously agreed by the whole council.

As a constituent, I have some concerns. I have the biggest division in the MD of Sturgeon, and I have twice as many miles to do as the other councillors. Before the last election we tried to divide our divisions to represent by population, and that was not possible. I have more public works people in my division; I have more areas, more time to spend to look after my taxpayers. Also, if we look at the number of health care facilities, lodges, schools, recreation facilities, industries, other governments, secondary highways, highways, agriculture concerns - and we have our MLAs to represent our government throughout the constituency - these are the reasons we feel that rural MLAs need to spend a lot of time, because of the huge rural constituency, to provide good representation. This is my presentation on behalf of myself.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Alex.
Questions or comments? Anyone else? Okay.
Thank you very much.

Now, Bob, if I'm correct, Steve has a brief to give, but is there anyone else who intended to give a brief today? We've heard from all those who wish to make presentations? Okay.

Steve.

MR. ZARUSKY: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman and colleagues from the Legislature, ladies and gentlemen. I just want

to take the time to first thank the committee for taking the time to meet with the people of this area. Welcome to Waskatenau, the heart of Redwater-Andrew.

Many individuals from Waskatenau and throughout the Redwater-Andrew constituency have expressed their concerns regarding the future of electoral boundaries in our great province, and we appreciate the opportunity to express these views. As the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, you have been charged with a most challenging and crucial task. The prospect of recommending sweeping changes to the Alberta electoral map means dramatically altering the political chemistry of our province. Whatever the decision, the ramifications of this committee will quite likely shape our provincial economic and social structure as we enter the 21st century. The importance of this issue is clear, and it becomes even more complex considering the emotional weight it carries, particularly in rural Alberta, and the political and legal implications that have transpired in other provinces as they have attempted to deal with this same issue. Despite the complexity and the depth of this issue, we must arrive at a decision. Ultimately, I would hope the decision would be based not on a hard, cold numerical formula but rather on the current social, cultural, and economic realities that make up everyday life in Alberta. If we approach the problem with this as our fundamental principle, I strongly suggest to the committee that we must maintain the urban/rural proportion of representation that now exists in our Legislature. Many suggest that to continue with our present electoral boundaries, we breach the American democratic tenet of one man/woman, one vote. In a strict comparative analysis of population figures this argument holds. However, while consideration of constituency numbers is certainly relevant to this topic, I know I speak for most Albertans in suggesting that they cannot be the bottom-line, guiding factor in an effort to promote better government.

The Fathers of Confederation understood the importance of a balanced approach. In response they created the Senate to present national/regional interests. As we all know, this upper Chamber has failed to effectively and consistently represent regional interest groups. However, it continues to hold promise for areas of Canada that are outnumbered and consequently outpowered in the House of Commons. To this end, ladies and gentlemen, the government of Alberta is committed to Senate reform. Because we don't have an elected, equal, and effective Senate in Ottawa, the interests of western Canadians are often pushed aside or dealt with only after the needs of central Canadians are adhered to.

Drawing the provincial electoral boundaries strictly on the basis of constituency populations, without a provincial Senate, would leave rural Alberta with the same problems that we as a western Canadian minority face at the federal level. In order to effectively represent rural regional interests and provide fair representation, we must limit the size and population of rural constituencies. Having lived and worked in both an urban and a rural setting over the past five years, I firmly believe that a rural constituency requires a limited population compared to an urban constituency if the same level of MLA representation is to be achieved. A simple examination of a rural MLA's obligations and circumstances compared to those of an urban MLA reveal this to be true.

Alberta covers a huge geographic expanse, and it is not uncommon for rural MLAs to spend more than 15 hours a week on the road, hours that we cannot spend serving our constituents. I think my colleague from Taber-Warner is a good

example of that. Increasing the population of a rural constituency would necessarily increase its size, further compounding this problem. Massive rural constituencies, with population spread from one corner to the other, would make effective representation next to impossible. Furthermore, I know from experience that more constituency offices with the latest phones, fax machines, and photocopiers will not compensate for an MLA who is forced to spend a large percentage of his or her time in the car or else waiting around airport terminals.

Rural constituents have always seemed to use their MLAs in a more direct and personal way than their urban counterparts. For example, a social services concern in a rural area is often directed at an MLA's office, while the city resident would probably bypass the MLA and go to the district office, which I think was brought up here by many presentations. The difference in handling these matters probably results from the proximity of government offices and better public information systems that exist in our cities.

Another demand that we as rural MLAs face is the time and energy spent dealing with various town, county, and community councils and boards, as was mentioned by many presenters here. The Redwater-Andrew constituency within its boundaries has 10 towns and villages, the most of any constituency in this province. In addition to town and village councils, I regularly meet with seven county and MD councils and in return with seven school boards and four hospital boards. Because local governments in rural areas do not have access to the bureaucratic infrastructure found in our cities, complete with various department experts and paralegal assistants, they rely on their MLA for provincial assistance to a much greater extent, just as do individual rural residents. I realize this committee has heard these arguments involving constituency size and local government commitments time and time again. However, I think the fact that they are mentioned at each of these rural hearings indicates their importance and consistency, as factors are common to every region of rural Alberta. For that reason and on behalf of constituents within the Redwater-Andrew constituency, I ask the commission to carefully consider these factors as you prepare your recommendations. Our quality of representation here, ladies and gentlemen, is at stake.

In conclusion, I would like to recognize the committee's success in fielding the views and opinions of Albertans from each region of this province, and I think you've done a super job of getting around the province. I also acknowledge the difficult task before you as you either choose to maintain the status quo and face legal challenges or introduce sweeping changes that would decimate rural constituencies. I do not envy your challenge. However, I have a great sense of confidence that your recommendations will be based on the principle of fair representation for all Albertans, taking into account the relevant factors that have been brought before this committee over the past four months. At this time I want to thank you for this commitment to better government and representation for all Albertans.

Thank you, and I hope you enjoy Redwater-Andrew and the village of Waskatenau.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Steve.

Questions or comments of Steve? Anyone else? Thank you, and thanks for summing up.

Before I ask the committee members for their closing comments, were there any comments or questions that anyone present would like to direct to any of us or comments you'd like

to make? Okay. Then we'll wrap up. Tom, would you like to start? We rotate this part of the process.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to start by thanking you for coming out today and making your presentations.

One of the presentations we had this afternoon talked about citizens having the right to representation and that there have been sacrifices made by many of the seniors, who came out long before I ever arrived and long before most of you arrived, I'm sure, as well. I was in a senior citizens' home not too long ago, and just as a matter of curiosity I asked people where they settled from. I had a varied list: Grande Prairie, Highvale, Calgary, Heinsburg, Vermilion, Cadogan, Hardisty, Schuler, La Corey, Camrose, Vegreville, Wetaskiwin. There were only two out of the group who were from Edmonton. I'm trying to explain to you that some of the problems we've got is that when we try and service our constituents, when they come in from wherever they arrive from, they come with a set of problems that have to be addressed. It doesn't matter that I'm an MLA and I can get to their door inside 20 minutes. They all have individual problems.

Steve, I think, in his presentation or before, when he was sitting beside me, spoke about how Albertans in rural parts of our province want to see their MLA. Well, I can tell you that the same thing happens inside the urban centre. As convenient as the telephone or the fax machine or the photocopier or the computer might be, it's not the same as trying to get in touch and see the eyes of your MLA and see if you've really got his ear, if he or she is really listening to you. So Albertans, whether they're in the small town of Waskatenau or in downtown Wetaskiwin or downtown Edmonton, aren't all that very much different.

We've got a major challenge, as Steve pointed out. It's going to be a difficult one. We've got to make sure that whatever we recommend to the commission and whatever the commission subsequently draws in terms of boundaries is going to be able to withstand a possible challenge in the courts based on the Charter of Rights. So the input we've had over today and over the course of the number of weeks and months as we've traveled around hasn't made our task any easier. I think that secretly what we were perhaps hoping for was that when we had traveled around and had 200 or 300 submissions, just maybe there might be a guardian angel that would say, "Here's the formula." That hasn't happened yet. But we do have a job, and we will endeavour to do our best and make sure that whatever we do is in the best interests of all of you here and all Albertans, regardless of whether you live in a high rise or on an acreage or whether you're farming a number of sections in the Peace River country.

Thank you again for coming out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Tom has fairly well summed up a lot of the events. I do want to thank you for coming today and making your presentations. One of the things that I think has been so important is that we have gone out and talked to the people in Alberta, and every time we've had a meeting, we've come up with a new idea. I think that's really important. Our job is going to be tough. We haven't started to sit down and discuss our thoughts or findings as yet, but we will

soon, and it will be tough.

We've had presentations that have in fact had formulas. I'm quite often teased about this. Because I'm an accountant, I love to look at numbers. I'm the bean counter of the group, and formulas always intrigue me. I've looked at these, and we've actually had some very interesting ones, quite unique by nature. So there are a lot of things to look at, a lot of input that has come from the various ridings in the various locations.

I do wish some of you would come to the urban settings. We're really not that bad. We do have large ridings. Things are in fact different in the urban settings, but the concerns are the same and the demands are the same. So if you are down in Calgary, come to Calgary-Foothills and we'll show you what our office goes through in a day. It's quite unique again.

Steve, thank you for having us. It's always a pleasure to be with you. You're a fantastic colleague to have in the House and on committee, and I appreciate you being out today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, being third on the list doesn't leave much to be said. Most of it's been covered very well. I think it's very much to your credit that on relatively short notice we've had - what? - 35 or 40 people here today. I think that's a credit to the people that have shown up here.

You know, I think one of the things we need to do is remember that we're all here representing Albertans. Many of us have rural ties even though we may currently represent an urban constituency. I think Pat said it very well. It would be nice to have some of you folks come into our constituencies and see what happens there. I can tell you that sometimes I wish the blasted phone would quit ringing off the hook, because I can't get through all the things I need to do because I'm so busy answering the phone, talking to everybody that calls me. Maybe I don't put so many miles in, but I'll tell you that sometimes my ear gets a little sore at the end of a day.

I think the only thing we can say for sure is that out of the 200-plus presentations we've had, we've had quite a diversity of viewpoints. We're sure not going to be able to satisfy everybody's concerns, but I think we can safely say we'll try to do the best we can with the information we've got. Seven heads are going to start butting up against each other pretty soon. You know, they say that two heads are better than one; I don't know what we can say about seven.

I think I'll leave it with that and thank you for coming out today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.

Just before I try to summarize, I might mention one other thing in the process. A couple of members of the panel have mentioned the past briefs we've received and that there have been formulas presented. I know that you know we can't keep 200-plus briefs tucked away in our heads at all times. Because this process started back in November and then, after a break over the Christmas season, reconvened in late January, we've been putting all the briefs on floppy discs on the computer. We are developing categories so that we will be able to pull from the computer either the key points in a brief or the key points made at a particular hearing, or where we want to see how many people raised fair representation or made reference to the schools and schooling of our children, we can pull all that

information out. If Pat wants us to go back and refresh our memories on a very detailed formula that was given to us while we were in Cardston, we can do that. Without that kind of help, we'd have reams of paper in front of us, and we'd be thumbing through trying to find the appropriate brief that someone wanted checked.

I've attempted in past hearings to summarize at the very end and to pick out a key element that's been in each of the briefs presented. Just before sharing that with you, I want to build on something Pat said when she indicated we've learned something new at each and every hearing. That's true. We've had about 30 hearings to date. Yes, there's a lot of repetition. Yes, we hear a lot of things here similar to the meeting this morning in Barrhead or the meeting yesterday in Hanna or the meeting on Monday morning in Calgary, but at each and every hearing there is something new that comes out. It might be a new twist on a previously mentioned idea; it might be a totally new concept. So for any skeptic who suggests that the hearing process is not one that has value, I suggest they go through our briefs. You'll see it for yourself; it is there.

Trying to summarize the 10 briefs which were given to us today here in Waskatenau, the first presenter indicated that the rural/urban balance should remain about as it is now. It should be an equal balance between urban and rural. We were reminded that the British Columbia court ruling should not influence Alberta, that this is Alberta and we should do what's right in Alberta, and if we're challenged in the courts, so be it. Representation by population is very important; however, it is not the only consideration that should be taken into account.

Then we were reminded that the Redwater-Andrew constituency is approximately 2,000 square miles, whereas Edmonton ridings are approximately seven square miles. We were asked – and by the way, this is a reoccurring theme. The vast majority of presenters have said: do not increase the size of the Legislative Assembly; don't try to solve your problem by adding more seats. While some people have said, "Well, if you have to, add one or two," most people have said, "Do not increase the size." To give you the two extremes, we've had briefs suggesting we go anywhere from 101 seats down to a low of about 68 or 69 seats. So we've had a lot of variation as well, but if there was a common theme, I'm sure that if we pull that statistic out of the computer, we'll find that many, many of the presenters have said, "Don't increase the size of the Assembly."

Rural Alberta must have a strong voice in the Legislature. The geographic area and the number of municipalities should be considered when setting boundaries. Again that's been a reoccurring theme, particularly in the rural areas: you must look at the geography of the constituency, and you must look at the number of communities within that constituency in making up the riding. Now, Steve mentioned the number of municipalities in this constituency. He's got many more local governments to work with than I do in Taber-Warner, yet I think we have

relatively the same size constituencies if you were looking at geography alone. That is a factor.

The next presenter suggested very strongly that it should be one person, one vote; that's a fundamental principle in our system, and it should be followed. The size and the diversity of Redwater-Andrew was raised. Then we had equity of population and the physical area as a factor. Then we were asked the question: what does fair really mean? Is it fairness to the elected person, or is it fairness to the children we serve? Then we had reference to the number of towns, villages, school boards, and hospital and health unit boards within this constituency. We were asked again in considering fairness not to reduce the number of rural representatives in the Assembly. We were reminded that everyone in a rural riding like Redwater-Andrew knows their MLA.

Then it was recommended that there be an equal split of 42 rural and 42 urban seats in the Assembly. It was recommended that we leave boundaries basically as they are. We were reminded that we should make our decision based on the social and cultural values that make up Alberta, that those are the things we should really focus on. That reminds me of one of the briefs this morning in Barrhead, where a presenter said, "Please, members of the committee, set aside your bipartisan positions and do what's right for Alberta."

I think that's basically a synopsis of what we've heard here. I just conclude by again thanking Steve, your MLA. He's been very persistent that there was a need to come out to this part of the province. A number of you wrote in and requested that meetings be held in the area. Obviously your MLA was right, based on the presenters we've had. It's been good to get out here. As Pat said, it's been good to get all around the province. We've been in Calgary and Edmonton, I believe five times in each city, for hearings, and we've been in small towns and medium-sized cities. It's a good process.

Frank earlier commented on how nice it would be if you could come in and visit his office. Pat made the same comment. I guess if we lived in an ideal world, it would be nice if Steve could trade places with Frank for six months. At the end of that period, Steve would have a much better idea of what it would be like to be a Calgary MLA, and you'd sure give Frank an education about the needs of rural Alberta. We don't live in a pure world, and that's not going to happen. Coming around holding meetings like this is about as close as we as elected people can get to getting a feel for how those of you feel in different parts of the province. It is really a fundamental part of the democratic process, where an all-party committee will come out and meet with, speak to, but most importantly, listen to the views of Albertans.

We thank you for your help in this very challenging and difficult task we have. Thanks for coming.

[The committee adjourned at 6:03 p.m.]

