

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[2:09 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to declare the public hearing of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries to be held here in Rycroft officially open, and with that, a special welcome to those of you who were able to come out today.

As some of you are aware, we did hold 29 public hearings before the Legislature began its work on March 8 of this year. A request came in from a number of constituencies for additional hearings. The committee debated that and took back a formal request to the Legislature. There were discussions between the House leaders of the three political parties, and the end result was that the mandate of the committee was extended so that we could make a final report later this calendar year, and 10 additional hearings were scheduled. So we're meeting. This is the first of the 10 additional hearings. We'll be in other communities throughout the province, including Mayerthorpe, St. Albert, Wetaskiwin, Brooks, Westlock, over in Rockyford, Rocky Mountain House, Wainwright, and Stettler. We'll be concluding the second set of hearings by a week Friday of this month. In the last meeting, which occurs in Wainwright, we'll see this portion of our work come to an end, and then the committee will sit down and begin to write its report.

One of the amendments presented to the standing order in the Assembly calls for the report to be made public once we've finished writing it. Normally a special or select committee of the Legislature reports to the Assembly first and then the report is made public. We all believe this is a vast improvement in that the report will be made public as soon as it's complete. When the Legislature reconvenes there will then have been an opportunity for consideration of the report not only by the members of the Assembly but by individuals from the public who participated in the process.

In a few moments I'm going to introduce our panel members and go through the process, but before doing that, I'd like to indicate that because this is a select special committee we are required to record all our proceedings. There is a written *Hansard* which is fully available to the public after we've completed the process. We don't want the microphones to in any way intimidate anyone. We've tried very hard to keep our hearings informal and relaxed. The procedure we follow is that we invite the first three presenters to come forward and sit at the table with us. We'll go through the first presenter's report. If there's a written report and it's of some length and duration, it's not necessary to read the entire report; you can highlight parts of it if you wish, and we take the actual written report and ensure that it goes into our records. Once the report has been given, members of the committee are given an opportunity to ask questions, and then we ask if there are any further questions or comments anyone present would like to make. Once we've concluded with the first presenter, we move on to the second and so on. We try to go through the process in that particular way.

Again I mention the microphones. Don't let them in any way stop a very, very open dialogue between us. We're here to learn. We're here to get ideas from you on a very important matter, electoral boundaries.

It goes without saying that our committee is not actually drawing lines between constituencies. So if in your brief you have a specific reference to a border, what we've said in other hearings is that we'll be pleased to pass that on to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Because remember the process: we report back to the Legislature with recommendations, basically the recommendations to establish the ground rules for a

commission; the Assembly then approves the makeup of the commission, and that is embodied in the legislation along with these new ground rules. The commission is traditionally made up of citizens, the Chief Electoral Officer, a judge, and the Chief Electoral Officer sits on our committee as an ex officio member. So we've taken any recommendations that come in that deal with the drawing of lines between constituencies and given the assurance that those recommendations will be passed on through the Chief Electoral Officer to the commission once it has been struck.

I might also mention that we will receive written briefs until the end of this month. So if you know someone who is not able to come today, who intended to be here to give a brief, if they would like to send something in written form, it can be handwritten or typed as long as we can get it by the end of the month. What we're doing is feeding all the briefs into a computer, because you probably wonder how on earth the committee can keep . . . By the time we finish this process we will have had 39 hearings. How do we keep it all straight? Well, we're using a computer so that we can categorize material. We're able to pull out of it how many individuals or groups recommended that there be no increase in the number of MLAs, for instance, or how many are recommending that there be some credit given to the number of municipalities within a constituency. So rather than each of us trying to rely on our own memories of what was said, we can go back and pull out in a master formula basis the information which has been presented to us from across the province.

We believe this is the most extensive set of hearings the province of Alberta has ever conducted. I mentioned 29 hearings to date; this is the 30th. Of the 29 held prior to today, nine were in Calgary and Edmonton, one each in Red Deer and Hanna, and the others in a variety of communities across the province, again depending on where there was a demand. We went back to Hanna twice, we went to Red Deer twice because of the number of requests by individuals who wanted to have input into the process.

So without any further comment from myself, I think I'm going to briefly introduce the members of our committee. After that I'm going to ask Mr. Pat Ledgerwood, the Chief Electoral Officer, to give some background to the British Columbia court decision, which really has brought our committee into being and is why we're doing our work, and then Frank Bruseker is going to lead us through some slides to show you some background information we have and we'll try to respond to questions you have. We'll then get right into your briefs and carry on.

So I'll begin, then, by introducing the panel members who are present. Starting on my far right, Pat Ledgerwood. Pat, as I've indicated, is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province. He's extremely knowledgeable, having worked in provincial elections in the past and worked with returning officers in the 83 constituencies around the province. He's a most valuable asset to our committee, and we really appreciate his input and advice.

Seated next to Pat is Tom Sigurdson. Tom represents the constituency of Edmonton-Belmont. He's a New Democratic member of the Assembly. Some of you in this constituency may recall that he worked with the late Grant Notley as an executive assistant, so he does have an affinity not only to this part of the province but to the electoral boundary process, as Mr. Notley served on a previous commission.

Then Mike Cardinal. Mike is the Conservative member for the Athabasca-Lac La Biche constituency. He's a first-time member of the Assembly and working very hard, and we welcome his input on the committee as well.

Frank Bruseker, I mentioned earlier, is going to go through the slide presentation with us. He's very adept at that, as he was a school teacher in a former life. He's a Liberal member of the Assembly for Calgary-North West, a first-time member of the Assembly and working hard, as are other members in the committee.

Pat Black. Pat is Frank's neighbour in that she represents the constituency of Calgary-Foothills, right next door. She's a chartered accountant by profession and likes formulas. So if any of you have ideas on formulas for the boundaries, that's one that would really get Pat's attention.

Of course Glen Clegg is your MLA. We invite the MLA for the area in which we are holding the hearing to join us as part of the panel. Glen, if you have some comments you wish to make at the end or to reinforce any of the briefs, you'll certainly have that opportunity. We do appreciate your fine hospitality in hosting us today and assisting in the arrangements for the meeting.

As well, we have Bob Pritchard. Bob is the senior administrator. He's the fellow we all scream at when things don't go right, and when they do go well, as a committee we take the credit. So keep that in mind. If there's anything you're unhappy about, see Bob. If you're ready to give accolades, we'll gladly take those.

Ted Edwards is with him. Ted was at the back of the room for registration. It's nice to see Ted back on the ground. He and his wife had their first child not long ago, so for a time you couldn't talk to him, his head was in the clouds, but he's coming back to earth now.

We have Gary and Doug with us from *Hansard*. They have been very faithful in trying to keep up with our committee and do their necessary work.

As I mentioned, there will be a written transcript of not only this hearing but all the hearings, which is readily available to the public so that you can see for yourself the kinds of issues which have been raised in various communities and the responses given.

I'm going to pause for just a moment to see – because it's been a long time since we had our last hearing – if other panel members have any comments they'd like to make. Are there key points I missed or something you'd like to see emphasized? Okay. They're all being very polite today. Then let's move on to Pat Ledgerwood, who will give us a brief overview on why the hearings are being held, and then we'll move on to the slide presentation by Frank.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In British Columbia they currently have a situation where their electoral divisions are divided so that the smallest one has just over 5,500 population; the largest has just over 68,000. With the impact of the charter of human rights, where one vote is equal to a vote in another district, the B.C. government commissioned a Justice Fisher to conduct a survey of the province and come up with some recommendations. Basically, he had three areas: to eliminate their dual ridings, which doesn't impact on us. Also, he was interested in increasing the number of seats from 69 to 75. We have a different system in Alberta. What does impact on us is the number of electors or the population in electoral divisions. What he recommended was that they divide the total population of British Columbia by 75 to come to an average and then all the electoral divisions be within plus or minus 25 percent of that figure. So in British Columbia the average population number would be 38,523, and then they would have to be within plus or minus 25 percent of that figure.

His commission was appointed in April of 1987, and they submitted their report in December of 1988. The B.C. government really didn't react quickly enough in the eyes of a Professor Dixon, so he took the B.C. government to court with the idea of forcing them to establish these new boundaries. The case was heard before Madam Chief Justice McLachlin of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, and she basically agreed with the Fisher commission, particularly on the average and plus or minus 25 percent. Now, there was no appeal to Justice McLachlin's decision, and we don't know exactly what the rationale of the B.C. decision-makers was. One factor may have been that Madam McLachlin was elevated to the Supreme Court of Canada, and of course this would have been the next level the appeal would have gone to.

The B.C. government then formed a commission, and they completed their work in 1989 with only minor changes to the Fisher commission. That is, they still had the 75 seats and the plus or minus 25 percent from the average. Those new boundaries came into effect in January of this year, so the next B.C. election will be fought using the 75 seats and the numbers as established by the Fisher commission and the subsequent commission. So the point we like to make at this point of the briefing is the plus or minus 25 percent. As Frank goes through his briefing, you can see what the impact would be if Alberta were to have to follow this particular format.

MR. BOGLE: Okay. Any questions for Pat before we move on to Frank and his presentation?

By the way, just before Frank does that, I was remiss in not introducing myself. For those of you who don't know, I'm Bob Bogle, the MLA for Taber-Warner.

Okay. Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: You probably picked up a package at the front door that looks like this, and on there are a number of maps and information that I'll go through. The series of slides you'll see up here, the first part of it at least, is basically the same as the package of material which you have before you.

This first transparency simply is a list of the 83 constituencies as they currently exist in the province shown in alphabetical order. The second list is again the 83 constituencies, but instead of being in alphabetical order this time, they are in numerical order, showing the largest constituency based upon voter population, that being Edmonton-Whitemud, down to the smallest constituency, being Cardston. There's one anomaly with Cardston. If you look at it, you'll notice there's a little asterisk. In Cardston there is the Blood Indian Reserve, and at the time of the last enumeration the members of that particular reserve chose not to be enumerated. In fact those members of that tribe should be included in that total of 8,105, so that figure is slightly lower than actually is the case.

If we take a census of all the electors in the province right now, you get a total of about one and a half million, and if you divide that by the current number of constituencies, which is 83, you get an average figure of 18,685 electors per constituency. Now, Mr. Ledgerwood referred to the 25 percent rule that is being applied in the province of British Columbia. If you use that 25 percent variation here in the province of Alberta, you get an upper end of 23,356 and a lower end of 14,014, which would suggest that all constituencies should fall within that range of 23,000 down to 14,000. So this is the same as that second list we showed you. If the 25 percent is applied, you'll see there are some that are highlighted in green. Those that are highlighted in green are more than 25 percent above. In other words,

they're greater than 23,000. The ones that are highlighted in pink are below the minus 25 percent; in other words, less than 14,000 electors per constituency. Those that are not highlighted fall within the range plus or minus 25 percent.

Here's a map of the province of Alberta. The ones that are coloured pink are those which are more than 25 percent below the average. You can see that in all cases if we use the electors list, all those constituencies are rural constituencies and, of course, do include this constituency of Dunvegan.

This is a map of the city of Calgary. All the ones which exceed the 25 percent – in other words, more than 25 percent above – are urban. This is Calgary. You can see a number of constituencies coloured in green. The next slide is the city of Edmonton. Again you can see a number of constituencies coloured in green, meaning they're more than 23,000. The city of Lethbridge is currently divided into two constituencies. They are not coloured. Currently they do fall within that range of plus or minus 25 percent.

This is the city of Medicine Hat. It has a number of lines on it, but Medicine Hat currently is one constituency. I believe it is the fourth largest constituency in the province by population and exceeds the 25 percent guideline.

The city of Red Deer is currently divided into two constituencies. Red Deer is a bit unusual. You'll notice there's a brown line, and the brown line represents the city of Red Deer city limits. The darker black line around the outside represents the county of Red Deer. When Red Deer got too large and needed to be split in two, the city of Red Deer by itself did not have sufficient population. What happened was that the commission at that time divided Red Deer into two parts, using the river as a dividing line, and then also took some of the outlying countryside as well. So the constituencies of Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South include some urban and some rural areas as well to get two constituencies.

This is the city of St. Albert, located just to the northwest of the city of Edmonton. It, too, is one of the larger constituencies and currently exceeds the guideline of 25 percent.

We looked at some of the constituencies and recognized that they were considerably smaller than the average and in fact exceeded the variation by as much as 35 percent below. So on this map of the province of Alberta you'll see some constituencies coloured in purple, and those are constituencies that are more than 35 percent below the mean. In terms of numbers, I believe that's 12,000 electors or less per constituency, and again you can see that Dunvegan is in that particular category.

This particular map shows only five constituencies which are coloured in yellow, and those constituencies are more than 50 percent below the mean; in other words, 10,000 electors or less in those five constituencies. You can see they're all located in the very southern part of the province.

Mr. Bogle mentioned when we started that today we have just commenced our final round of public hearings, and this is the list of the final round we're going to be going through. You can see we're starting in Rycroft. We had a number of requests that our committee return to these constituencies or go there for a first time, and we are doing that. We'll complete our hearings next Friday. This map with all the blue dots shows the locations where we have been or will be going in our hearings process.

This is a combination of two transparencies. The last one showed you dots showing where we have gone or will be going, and the purple colour again shows you those constituencies that are more than 35 percent below the average of 18,000. You can see that what we have attempted to do is get into those areas

that potentially will see the greatest amount of change in their electoral boundary redistribution.

One of the questions that came out early in our hearings process was: instead of using the voters list – in other words, only those people that are Canadian citizens and over 18 – what about using the total population list? That would include children. That would include landed immigrants who do not yet vote. That would take into account situations like I mentioned at Cardston, where the Blood Indian Reserve chose not to be enumerated and therefore was left off the list. If you use the total population of the entire province – we have just under 2.4 million people in the province right now – and if you divide that by 83, then you're going to get some different numbers. You're going to achieve an average figure of 28,500 total population per constituency. Then applying that 25 percent variation, as was done in British Columbia that I've been talking about, you get a higher end of 35,000 and a lower end of 21,000. So then what we did – we've got a few more slides we're going to show you – is take that and apply that to the same kind of process and analysis we've just gone through. We'll show you those slides right now.

This again is a list – and you don't have it in your package – showing in green the ones which exceed or are higher than the plus 25 percent; in other words, more than 35,000 total population. The ones that are in pink are below the variation; in other words, less than 21,000 in population. The interesting thing that happens here is that we have more that are not coloured, more in the white area. We have one fewer coloured green and one fewer coloured pink, so it seems that the variation is not as severe when we look at population as it is when we look at the electors list.

Here we have again a map of Alberta. It's similar to the last one. The pink shows those that are 25 percent below the average. But you'll notice that when we use total population on this one, there are in fact two constituencies which are greater than 25 percent – in other words, more than 35,000 in terms of population – and those are the constituency of Grande Prairie on the western border and the constituency of Fort McMurray in the northeast corner.

Again this is the city of Calgary, showing constituencies which are more than 25 percent above. The net effect in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary is that some have shifted category, but we still have a number which are over the 25 percent guideline in Calgary, on this slide. The next slide is Edmonton, and again we'll show you a number that are exceeding the 25 percent guideline. With all of these slides the thing I want to point out that we have noticed is that the constituencies that seem to be very large and very populous are those around the perimeters of the cities, where growth is occurring and population is moving in.

The purple coloured constituencies here, once again still using total population or census figures as opposed to electors, again show those constituencies that are more than 35 percent away from the average and are in fact quite small. You will notice that Dunvegan happens to be one of the ones that even with the population figures are more than 35 percent away from the average figure.

An interesting thing here. If you lift it up just a little bit there, you will notice that on this one there is only one constituency that is 50 percent away from the average, and that is the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest in the very southeast corner of the province. It's quite a small constituency in population.

Early on in our hearings process the other thing that we did was – we wanted to find out what was happening in the other provinces. We didn't go right across Canada because we didn't feel that would be cost-effective, but we looked at western Canada, and we did travel to Winnipeg and met with the Chief Electoral Officer and members of government and opposition parties in Manitoba. We did the same thing in Regina and spoke to people regarding what's happened in the province of Saskatchewan, and we traveled to Victoria and met with people to find out what is happening in the province of British Columbia, to find out what is going on there.

Mr. Bogle mentioned a total of, I think, 39 hearings. You can see where we've had our hearings to date. We've had a few more in Edmonton and Calgary because we had quite a number of people showing up there in quite a number of constituencies. You can see we've had two in Red Deer, two in Hanna, and then one in all of the other locations that are listed there. You can see the total number of presentations we've had from different groups: school groups, school boards, hospital boards, county councils, town councils, et cetera. Two hundred and eighty-four presentations have been made, so we've had quite a lot of input from a real diversity of sources.

I believe that's the last slide.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.

Any questions re the presentation? It's a lot of material, but one of the things we were trying to point out in the slides is as a result of a recommendation at one of the early hearings. Even though we as a committee have not sat down to talk about conclusions, we said, "Let's look at total population rather than just electors," because a number of provinces in Canada do that. You've noticed that while it doesn't meet all of the needs in terms of solving problems, it certainly lessens the impact of the problem, as far as the committee is concerned.

Are there any other questions that anyone has before we move on with the presentations? Yes.

MR. MELNYK: Mr. Bogle, I've noticed at the other hearings as well as this, the one at Donnelly as well, that the emphasis is always on population. Nobody seems to take into consideration that you're not just dealing with population and people living there when you're running a country. You have to manage the land, the vast area, the resources. This has to be managed well for the people's benefit in the whole province of Alberta, and this is something that everybody seems to skirt around. Nobody mentions that much as to how one person can manage, say, 10,000 square miles and another person, maybe 1,000 square miles.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we hold that question and deal with it in our wrap-up, in a general discussion that we all have? You're on a good point. I'm just thinking that it's a general comment that might best be dealt with after we've heard from the presenters. It isn't the first time it's been raised; it has come up before. So are there any questions on Frank's presentation? With your permission, we'll deal with that at the end.

Okay, Bob, I think we're ready for the first three presenters.

MR. PRITCHARD: There are four presenters this afternoon, so I thought we'd call up two at a time. If Bill Housman and Orist Melnyk would come up, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Bill, would you like to lead off, please, since you were the first called up?

MR. HOUSMAN: Okay. First I would just like to thank the panel on behalf of the council of the county of Grande Prairie for the privilege of presenting here. I think I will take advantage of your comments to start with, and I don't think I'll read it all; I'll just try to highlight some of them.

The county feels that the current distribution of 42 urban ridings and 41 rural ridings should be maintained. We feel that the rural Members of the Legislative Assembly must deal more directly with a higher percentage of the constituents than urban members. As well, in Alberta the rural Members of the Legislative Assembly must deal more directly with issues relating to oil, gas, forestry, grazing leases, and other particular things.

The county of Grande Prairie, due to its size, is represented by three Members of the Legislative Assembly. Each member must deal with a far greater number of local governments than an urban member. An urban member has one city hall, one hospital board, two school boards, one recreation board, and one chamber of commerce to deal with, whereas the rural members have many local governments to deal with. If you take the constituency of Smoky River, which a portion of the county of Grande Prairie is in, that legislative member has a total of 62 different bodies to deal with, including towns, villages, counties, municipal districts, school boards, library boards, and so on.

We do not agree with the argument that population is the only factor that should be used in setting the size of constituencies. If that is used, some urban constituencies would be only several miles across and some rural areas would be hundreds of miles across, and I believe the sheer distance would prevent the rural member from representing his constituents in the manner he or she would like.

I think, in conclusion, that we would just like to stress that the population should not be the only criterion used in determining the boundaries because of the large areas in Alberta. I believe there are some other criteria that should take the same preference as population.

I don't envy your task. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Bill. Questions from the panel? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Housman, thank you very much for your presentation. Sir, you've suggested that the ratio of 42 urban, 41 rural constituencies remain pretty much the same. Alberta's not unique; we've experienced across Canada and North America rural depopulation. Currently we've got approximately 60 percent of Albertans living in urban centres, 40 percent in rural and smaller communities. If you've got pretty much a 50-50 ratio right now with the 42-41 split, would there be a point in number where you would suggest that maybe the ratio ought to change?

MR. HOUSMAN: I suppose down the road somewhere it might happen, but I think if you're going to swing the balance largely to the urban side, then you're creating another unfair situation. So I don't think two wrongs make a right when you're going to create a situation that is unfair too.

MR. SIGURDSON: When you say "somewhere down the road," I'm hoping that you can help the committee to know . . . Have you got a number in your mind where you would suggest that – is it two-thirds in the urban centres that would cause you to think that maybe the ratio ought to change? Is it three-quarters?

MR. HOUSMAN: No, I couldn't agree with a one-third, two-thirds split.

MR. SIGURDSON: No, no; I'm sorry. If the population were two-thirds in urban centres, would you still want to maintain a 50-50 ratio between urban and rural seats? Or if you had a population with three-quarters of Alberta living in urban centres and one-quarter living in rural settings, would it be at that point that you would change the ratio?

MR. HOUSMAN: I think maybe we're getting away from what I think the rural people are trying to present here. I think we want a situation where we can be represented by our MLAs, and if we get large, large areas – well, take Glen's, for example. If you increase that 50 percent, he hasn't got a hope of getting around to those people. I don't think that we can get much more than . . . I wouldn't have too much objection to an increase in the urban, a small increase, but I don't think we can get too far away. I don't think you increase that to the detriment of the rural constituency, because they just can't get around to it.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Can I just ask a quick follow-up then? If you're going to increase the number of urban seats – I just want to make sure that I understand you – are you suggesting that there be an equivalent increase in rural seats as well? I'm sort of confused now. Do you want to increase the number of seats and give them all to urban Alberta?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think Bill covered that in his opening comments.

MR. HOUSMAN: Maybe I'll try to answer the question. I think, like I said, a small increase in the urban area I could – I'm not going to like it, but I could buy it. I have a couple of copies, if you would . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, thanks very much, Bill.
Anyone else? Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Bill, I'm wondering. As you know, our committee came into being as a result of a Charter challenge in British Columbia. I guess what I'm going to ask you is: do you think there should be two systems for determining distribution, one for rural and one for urban?

MR. HOUSMAN: I never thought about that. I don't know whether I could go for that.

MR. MELNYK: Might I ask a question?

MRS. BLACK: Yeah.

MR. MELNYK: Just on what you've said here, when you're saying two systems in determining the electoral divisions, I think you'd be working yourself into a corner. Because immediately people, one side or the other side, when a problem arises, will point fingers at the other side and say, "If we had what the other people have, this probably wouldn't have happened," or vice versa. I really would tend to stay away from that.

MRS. BLACK: Right now what we had in the last distribution, the commission was instructed to have 41 rural seats and the

urban centres were to have 42 based on distribution by eligible voter, and that's how the distribution took place. I guess what I'm wondering from your comments is that if you don't go on population – I guess my question, then, comes back to: what do you define as representation?

MR. HOUSMAN: What I would define as representation is an area where, regardless of whether it's urban or rural, that Member of the Legislative Assembly can get around to associate or talk with and represent his constituency. That's I think what I would call representation. I think you have to have rapport with the constituency to be able to represent them. When you get too large an area, I don't think you're going to do that. I think that several of the rural MLAs right now are at a distinct disadvantage to try to represent their people the way they would like, and if it gets any bigger, well, I don't know what would happen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Anyone from the audience?

All right. Orist, I'm ready for you. By the way, your opening comment: I noticed that Bill covered that point. So there's one more example of someone who's brought up the concern for a geographic area with its resources and so on.

MR. MELNYK: I'd like to say welcome to the panel, hon. members. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries for returning to the Peace River country. We are very appreciative that you chose to return to allow additional input on the important topic of electoral representation. There's a few people in here that went to Donnelly. The hearing at Donnelly was represented a little – let's just say we had a lot more briefs at Donnelly than we have . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it was a different time of year. We realize, and it's unfortunate, that we're back in the middle of summer. We knew that the numbers would be down, but we just had to complete this portion of our work so that we could get into the writing of our report in September. So the committee is aware that one of the reasons the numbers are down is because of the time of year.

MR. MELNYK: Much has been said about representation by population and how it supposedly will redress our electoral inequities. We see that some misinformed Albertans appear to condone electoral distribution based on a rep by pop solution used in British Columbia. This was a decision that did not take into account area and distance factors. ID 19 wishes to go on record as saying that representation by population as it applies to Alberta is undemocratic and unfair. Clearly, in our view representation by population should be seen as an appropriate solution only when you add two additional factors: area and distance. If population, area, and distance are equal, then representation by population would be extremely effective. This would work in some highly populated European communities.

In Alberta we have a large landmass and a limited population in all but a few concentrated cities and areas. Alberta is a mix of urban and rural people entitled to fair and reasonable representation in the Legislature. Many ridings have an additional difficulty: the distance factor from the capital city of Edmonton. Edmonton can be a considerable distance if you are from Milk River or High Level and many points in between. Much valuable time can be consumed by an MLA just by driving

to and from his duties in Edmonton and also traveling around meeting with the constituents. City MLAs do not have this problem and can spend more time with their constituents.

Finally, we urge this committee to recognize the factors of distance and area when determining electoral boundaries. Do not fall into the rep by pop trap and discriminate against rural Albertans, who already have difficulty meeting and doing business with their MLAs. Remember what Marvin Moore, former MLA cabinet minister, told you in Donnelly about the difficulties he had trying to keep in close contact with his constituents.

To close, we consider an urban MLA with 30,000 constituents from the Edmonton or Calgary area to be equal to a rural MLA whose home base is six hours' driving time away from the capital and who has 3,000 to 5,000 constituents. Both, we are sure, will work very hard. One will be close at hand for many constituents, while the other will spend time getting to and from his home base and to constituents' meetings. Fewer voting constituents, for sure, but many more multitudes of organizations. Local governments, hospital boards, school boards: all these boards demand a share of his time and efforts. It is our wish that this committee take a serious look at preserving effective, democratic government in rural Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Orist. Questions from panel members? Well, I'd like to ask a question, Orist. On the top of the last page, where you speak of an urban MLA with 30,000 constituents and a rural member with 3,000 to 5,000 constituents, I'm wondering if there is a typing error there, because even our smallest constituency, Cardston, with over 8,000 electors not counting the 1,800 Blood Indians . . . Was it the intent to go to 3,000 to 5,000 constituents in this comparison?

MR. MELNYK: No, that was just an example set. That was meant as an example. What we are trying to get at is that if you have a landmass – just what I mentioned before – we don't care how many people reside in that area, you have to manage that land. It's not just the people that you're managing; you have to manage that land. For instance, Glen has to look after all this land, and it's not going to benefit just the people, the 9,000 or 10,000 or whatever that live in the area; it's going to benefit all of Alberta if it's managed properly. There is no way that you can give Glen more land to manage to get up to more or less a little more equal with people that might live in a little portion of Edmonton that the MLA can walk across in a couple of hours. I understand those people complaining, but I don't think some of them realize the distance we're talking about. Some of them don't realize what's involved in managing our country, in managing our resources. A lot of those people have never been out here, and to them, Edmonton or Calgary, that's it. They think the whole ball of wax is in Edmonton and Calgary.

I think we people in rural areas know just as much about Edmonton and Calgary as we know about the rest of Alberta, and that's the difference. We realize what it takes to run this country. Where those people are, and I hate to say this, because a lot of you people live in Edmonton, but they have their own little . . . I have relatives, and they know what's going on just around them in their little area, and they really don't care what's going on outside Edmonton. You can't let that dictate our electoral boundaries. You just can't.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Yes, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: I'm going to have to go back, Orist, to my question earlier. When you're trying to draw up some guidelines to hand to a commission to make distributions within this province, do you feel there should be some guidelines that pertain to rural Alberta and some guidelines that pertain to urban Alberta? Okay; an example. My riding is in Calgary. My trip to Edmonton is seven hours, there and back. I have over 30,000 residents, but my riding is only maybe 30 square kilometres. I also have 20,000 additional people in my riding for nine months of the year at the University of Calgary. So when you relate that to Glen's riding, can you use the same factors in both areas?

MR. MELNYK: To an extent. I see your problem, Pat – if I may call you Pat?

MRS. BLACK: Please do.

MR. MELNYK: I can see your problem. But when you are suggesting that the numbers of people in there . . . When you're managing your constituency, you're managing – what? You're managing the schools, you're managing the area, the landmass, the people residing there. But what happens to the landmass is what they take as to how good your constituency is whether you've got roads, whether you've got water. This is what dictates how your people are going to survive or whether it's good. Glen has to do the same thing; the only thing is that he has about a 50 or 70 times larger area, and he has to manage that as well. So you just put yourself in his . . .

MRS. BLACK: Well, yeah. How do you interchange the two, or do you? This is my question.

MR. MELNYK: I don't think you can. You probably can't interchange it really. Somehow your constituency in Calgary has to be made proportionate so that your workload is proportionate to Glen's workload or Al Adair's workload. This is what I'm saying: you as an MLA can only do so much; you can only cover so much area. If you can manage that 30 square miles that you're talking about, this is fine. If you can't, maybe you should have a smaller area. But what we're talking about here is that possibly we should increase Glen's area by half again or twice.

MRS. BLACK: Or split mine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Orist, I think the gentleman at the . . . Pat, I think the gentleman at the back wanted to supplement. Yes?

MR. SCHNEIDER: Right. It's the annexation, and the city of Red Deer case is just a good example of what we're going to have to do throughout the province, that people will have to recommend, I would say. As MLAs provincially, your job is not just to represent your area but the public at large. Federally we're reminded of that and to remain Canadians, so again we should remind ourselves to remain Albertans in provincial places. I mean, that's our goal with Senate reform. People who live in the city, like myself, and in the rural area are faced with both worlds, we understand, once it's annexed. So if you put them together and they have to work together, somehow balancing the population – a 50-50 split, probably that kind of a deal – you'll have big areas.

MR. MELNYK: I agree with that. I probably didn't answer your . . .

MR. SCHNEIDER: How fair is the split system? I think it's still a system, but they're using both worlds.

MR. MELNYK: It's no easy solution, but when these areas are being based on representation by population, we can turn around and start a whole ball of wax going the opposite way: population or representation by area. And then where would the cities go? I mean, it could be worked just the opposite. It's working this way, but it could be the other. There's nobody here that can say that one isn't as legitimate as the other. I mean, the area's got to be managed; the people have to be managed. I know you've got a job.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Orist.
Any other questions?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I'd just like to welcome Orist to Charterland.

MR. SCHNEIDER: That's where the problem is: the Charter of Rights and Freedoms doesn't leave everybody equal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir.

MRS. BLACK: That's been the problem with everything.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, Keith Moore from Spirit River. I think what the commission's task is is to define how to give all Albertans fair, equal representation, and it isn't entirely based on population. It can't be. Access to government services, to an MLA's time to give each individual board or council positions a representative of the provincial government I think is an important aspect in there. I realize this is a difficult task, but it's finding the balance between fair representation for all voters not only on a population basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MRS. BLACK: Could I ask a question of that gentleman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MRS. BLACK: Do you feel that way even if in certain special circumstances ridings had to exceed that 25 percent variance?

MR. MOORE: They'd vary. You'd have to be on an individual case. It would have to be studied individually.

MRS. BLACK: That's what I mean. Would you as a resident of Alberta accept that in this certain circumstance, because of the demographics and geography of the riding, that particular riding may have to exceed that 25 percent variance?

MR. MOORE: I think you may on occasion, yes, in order to get equal, fair representation for all residents of Alberta.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Yes, sir.

MR. BOYD: That . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. Could you introduce yourself, just for *Hansard*?

MR. BOYD: I'm Jim Boyd from Fairview.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. BOYD: You're interested in formulas, and I'm sure I don't know how you could come up with a formula that, you know, would be right for everyone. But I think, as it is mentioned here, that resources have to be taken into consideration. There is such a complexity of problems or whatever that might come up. Every individual in a rural constituency, I believe, has more complex problems in relation to that person - this is my idea - than, say, a person in an urban area. In an urban population I think there may be more, you might say, social problems, but when you get into resource areas . . . A farmer has agricultural problems; he's got gas wells; he's got so many things that affect him that his representative has to consider so many things, their complexity. I think you've got maybe simpler problems for each member relative to what you have in the rural areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a uniqueness as well. If I could use as an example - and, Glen, I don't know if you have any cases where your constituents are working on the B.C. side of the border and then they have a problem with the workers' compensation in British Columbia. That came out when we were in Pincher Creek. Fred Bradley, the member who has a good number of people who work in the coal mines in Sparwood, has had to educate himself on the rules of B.C.'s workers' compensation vis-à-vis our own. Because my constituency goes up against the American border, I occasionally have Albertans who have problems at customs or Albertans who are working just over the border and something happens with their work permit. The fact that it's a federal responsibility doesn't cut much ice. Someone comes to you; you try to help.

So I guess I'm just amplifying what you've said in that there are uniquenesses, and I'm sure the same case can be made in Calgary and Edmonton. If you happen to have a constituency where the international airport's located, you might have some unique factors that enter into your workload vis-à-vis a member who's some distance away from it. It's all part of the complexity.

MR. BOYD: Adding to that, when you're dealing with forestry and mines and agriculture and the oil fields, it becomes a great number of issues for the number of people that are in that area.

MR. VAN BEERS: I'm Gerry Van Beers. I'm also a representative of the MD of Fairview. I think Orist here is explaining the feelings of all of us - by the way he speaks with his hands, you know.

MR. MELNYK: If you lived in a French community . . .

MR. VAN BEERS: Not too long ago I was in Glen's office, and in the short time I was there, he got three calls. One was from Spirit River, another one from Gordondale, and then he got lucky: he got a call from somebody that wanted to go for a coffee with him in the Dunvegan motel, in the restaurant down there. But that's the way it is, you know, from one end to the other. I definitely don't envy him his job, because even as a

councillor in my little ward, I know what all those calls can mean. If you want to do a good job, it's a big job.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's go on and hear the last two briefs we have, and then we can spend a little more time on our conclusion and open discussion.

Thanks very much, Orist and Bill.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could have the next two: Greg Gayton and Harry Byers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Greg, would you like to start first, since you were introduced first?

MR. GAYTON: Sure. My name is Greg Gayton. I am the municipal manager with the village of Berwyn.

The village of Berwyn council, under the signature of its mayor, Fred Kinley, had filed this brief on January 15, 1990, with the commission. We reviewed it at our last council meeting and decided not to make any changes to what had already been filed. I'll pass those along, and for the benefit of the rest of the people here I can read what our village council has said in regards to this. Maybe before I do, I would comment that it's interesting how many people working independently have come up with much the same points as I noticed from the briefs from the county of Grande Prairie and ID 19.

The council of the village of Berwyn submitted its position in regards to the problems of provincial electoral boundaries. Our council felt that while rural Alberta had more representation in Alberta's Legislature than a strict representation by population would give it, we feel that the rationale for this situation is entirely reasonable and justifiable. Being a small community in northern Alberta, we are conversant with the long distances and the long hours our MLA must travel and endure. While an MLA in Edmonton or Calgary can keep his constituency within a 10- or 15-minute drive, rural members must spend a lot of time in automobiles and aircraft to reach the many communities in their constituencies.

We noted that a city riding is usually a relatively homogenous area; much of its population has the same demographic characteristics. If you get into a large rural area, you can have a lot of communities of different sizes, different natures, and under quite different circumstances.

We also pointed out the number of elected officials in rural ridings - municipal councils, school boards, hospital boards, health units - and then we contrasted that with the city of Edmonton where there is one municipal council, two school boards, and one board of health.

We also felt that if our MLAs had to go to greater lengths to stay in touch with their communities and their constituents, the needed contact that we should have with our MLAs would deteriorate, and this would be not only to the detriment of the communities and the people involved but also of the provincial government.

Our council also felt that rural Alberta still has a lot of importance to all of Alberta in other ways besides population. The resources that this province was built on - agriculture, oil, and gas - came from rural Alberta. Forest resources will be coming from rural Alberta. To have more rural representation will enlarge and strengthen Alberta's care and control of our natural resources. There is a growing emphasis on our environment, and public attention will focus on the stewardship of resources in our rural areas. Future members of the Legislature will have to monitor the status of forests and rivers in their

constituencies as well as the people. Expanding the size of northern Alberta constituencies will make this task extremely difficult for northern MLAs.

It is no secret that the populations in many parts of rural Alberta are declining. But there are other geographic and economic circumstances that make rural Alberta a special case, and we feel that these circumstances warrant special treatment.

We close by urging the committee to consider alternatives that would ensure that rural Alberta continues to have a strong presence in future Legislatures.

I've sort of paraphrased what we had in there to speed up the process a little bit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Greg. Questions of Greg? No? Does anyone have anything to add? Okay. Thank you.

Harry.

MR. BYERS: My name is Harry Byers, and I'm appearing on behalf of the Dunvegan Progressive Conservative Association.

Mr. Chairman and members of the panel, I would like to put forward two ideas that I think should be used in formulating the rules that you're going to set up to come to how the boundaries are going to be redistributed. The first suggestion I have is the concept of accessibility, and by accessibility I mean accessibility of both the member to the constituents and the constituents to the member.

We are sitting in Dunvegan here today, and as we saw on the slides earlier, Dunvegan is geographically one of the largest constituencies in the province. It is also one of the constituencies that's most remote from the capital and from the central part of the province. There's no scheduled airline service into this constituency. There's no train service obviously. There are buses; they pass through the constituency a couple of times a day. The member who serves this constituency must leave it to actually get on an airplane to go to Edmonton to sit in the Legislature.

The constituency itself is about 180 miles across, east and west, and about 350 miles north and south at this point. The Peace River flows pretty much through the middle of it, and in that entire length there's only one spot in this entire constituency to cross that river, and that's at Dunvegan. So the constituency itself is geographically large.

The topography and the road systems also make it difficult to travel around the constituency. Our member must attempt to serve and see as many of his constituents as he possibly can. With these limitations he spends many, many hours and thousands of miles in a private vehicle getting to various areas.

In addition to traveling both to and from the constituency and within the constituency itself, I believe that in Dunvegan - I may be wrong - there are about 125 town, village, municipal, and improvement district councils; rural electrification associations; gas co-ops; rec boards; library boards; agricultural societies; school boards; and other public interest groups that must deal with our MLA. I don't know what the averages are for the urban MLAs, but I suspect they are something considerably less than that.

One particular example in this constituency is to have the MLA deal with the people and see the people in an area called Gundy. Gundy is immediately against the British Columbia border. In order to get to Gundy, you must travel out of the province of Alberta into British Columbia and then back into Gundy. While Gundy is in Alberta, there is no road to get to it from Alberta. These are additional miles that I don't think anybody would expect an MLA or anybody to do.

My point, I think, is that there should be a fairness in this. I cannot give you a formula for that; I don't know what the formula is. But I think there's got to be a fairness that has to include things such as topography, the geography of the situation, the physical features of the area involved, and in general – I guess there isn't a better word for it – the size of the job involved. The size of the job involved in being a rural MLA in a constituency like Dunvegan is just immense.

There's been great discussion about this 25 percent factor. I don't know whether the committee is taking it on itself as being bound by this particular British Columbia decision or not, but I might suggest that maybe it could be modified and used in a different way. Perhaps the 25 percent factor could be used in the cities or in the urban areas so that no urban area is 25 percent higher or lower than any other urban area, and used in the rural areas so that no rural area is higher or lower than 25 percent of any other rural constituency.

Now, as to questions there were earlier as to where do you draw the map – do you keep 41-42 at this point, or do you make a modification on that? – I don't know. I think that things other than pure population numbers have to be considered. Rural Alberta needs its MLAs, and we need them in the Legislature in sufficient number so that they are of significance when they do in fact speak out. To paraphrase Orist a little bit, I recall seeing recently that someone at the city of Edmonton building department and someone at the city of Calgary building department had a bet on as to who would have the most new housing starts, and Calgary won by a considerable amount. I don't know what the bet was, but they did. We don't see that kind of boom in the rural areas anymore. There is a mass movement worldwide of population to the large urban centres, but if we do not have representation in government in sufficient numbers to make our positions known, we are going to, I suppose, die a lot more quickly or perhaps become simply a poor sister of the big urban centres.

Thank you for hearing me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Harry. Questions or comments? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Harry, would you basically subscribe to the rule of majority rule?

MR. BYERS: Basically, yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: Basically? If the majority of Albertans voted for party A, would you basically accept the premise that party A ought to be government?

MR. BYERS: Yes. I know where you're going.

MR. SIGURDSON: You know where I'm going?

MR. BYERS: Yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: Because the next question in line is that if you've got 30 percent of Albertans living in an area of Alberta but controlling 50 percent of the seats, and 70 percent of Albertans living in another area of Alberta and they control 50 percent of the seats, that 30 percent could effectively control the voice of government.

MR. BYERS: And that's rep by pop, basically.

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh no. No; that's rep by area.

MR. BYERS: Rep by area, yes; I'm sorry. You were saying . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: You could have pretty much the will of the majority put aside if you haven't got representation by population.

MR. BYERS: To a certain extent. I don't think I'm saying to take it that far. I'm suggesting that you have to consider all of the other factors too. If you're going to do it strictly on rep by population, then the game is over with.

MR. SIGURDSON: I guess the example that comes to mind is that in the last election in Saskatchewan the government party had fewer votes than the opposition party, and because of the way that province was carved up, even though the government party had fewer votes, they still maintained government.

MR. BYERS: That's happened before. It's happened federally too.

I'm just suggesting there are other factors. I believe if you're going to maintain this province in the rural areas in any way and manage it as Orist has suggested in any way and service the people in it in any way – I think I'm talking beyond management of resources here. We're Albertans too. In Dunvegan our access to government is extremely limited from the standpoint of . . . No social services offices in Dunvegan, period. For those kinds of things people drive hundreds of miles to get the basic services that anyone in Edmonton can go down to a downtown office and see. We understand that. We're living here; we don't expect that same kind of level. But I think we feel that there must be some reasonable level to which an MLA can represent us. I don't know what else you can do really. If you go eventually to strictly rep by pop, you will have one member in northern Alberta eventually.

MR. MELNYK: Tom, I would like to say at this point that I think our province will eventually turn out only as well as we manage the resources, and it's our MLAs throughout the rural areas that are going to dictate what our province is going to end up with. This is what we're concerned about. When you put too much on them, they can't. They just can't do any more than they're doing now. I've been trying to get ahold of Glen for two weeks and finally saw him today. Now, that's a prime example. I mean, he's just too busy. He just has to be so many different places, and probably three or four in the same time slot too, so he's kept two or three in.

The rural area is where everything that Alberta is about happens, whether it's your forestry, natural gas, oil, or whatever. Sure, the cities live – I mean, I don't begrudge the cities. They live off rural Alberta. That's a known fact, and that's probably the way it should be, because you can't have the manufacturing out in the country. You have to have the services to be able to keep the people there, and this is fine; we're not complaining. But when you try to overload our MLAs already to the point where they can't manage, then there's something wrong, and this is what's being suggested. When you are suggesting a cut or enlarging rural constituencies, it just won't work. It'll get to the point where nobody will want to run, because you've got to be stupid to accept something that's impossible. There's just no way. I mean, I'm concerned . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: I don't think you'll ever find a point where you'll find a shortage of candidates in constituencies.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything else, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, that's fine. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. CARDINAL: I just have a quick question for presenters, a comment and a question. First of all, I think I hear you saying that you want rural Albertans to have the opportunity to have effective representation by their MLAs. As you know, living in Alberta, we realize what's happened in Canada as far as representation where central Canada controls everything. You can see a process like that happening in Alberta if we do go with straight population. I don't think Albertans are asking too much when you say, "Yes, we should have effective representation or the opportunity for MLAs to do that." That's what I see. I don't know if I'm right or wrong if that's what I hear. But you don't have a specific recommendation as to how we may achieve that?

MR. MELNYK: Well, no. To be specific, there are so many things that have to be taken into consideration. What a person might blurt out here – there might be something that's not going to work, that falls into place that throws that theory out completely. But I think what all of us here are trying to say is that rural Alberta is what Alberta is going to be about, what it's about now and in the future, and we want enough people in there to manage our resources. We don't want to erode them to the point where they can't manage them properly.

We're hearing about the pulp mills now. That's how old, and the MLAs are already . . . The controversy there is tremendous, and where is it about? Rural Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Yeah. Go ahead.

MR. CARDINAL: I haven't finished yet. You can tell by the few gray hairs when they talk about pulp mills in the constituency.

The commission no doubt will be put in place to finalize the hearing process and, I guess, come up with some of the answers. How could you see the commission being made up, and who should be on it as a representative?

MR. MELNYK: On your commission?

MR. CARDINAL: The final commission. Not us, because we're not the committee that will finalize the process. I think Bob explained that earlier.

MRS. BLACK: Can I make a comment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: On this point? On the makeup of the commission?

MRS. BLACK: Well, no. Just his last closing comment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh. All right.

I think what Mike is asking is the makeup of the commission. The last commission, as an example, was chaired by a judge, had as its members the Chief Electoral Officer, three government

members, one opposition member, and one citizen. That was the makeup of the last commission in Alberta. I guess you were posing the question to Orist and/or others. One of the questions we must assess and deliberate is the makeup of the commission.

MR. MOORE: I would suggest much along the same lines, perhaps with a little more input from local government officials or representatives of local governments who are dealing with the elected provincial representatives.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. We've had several briefs that have suggested that there be some input from people who are involved in the MDs and Cs or AUMA, possibly the ID council. There have been suggestions in terms of our visit to the other three western provinces. We noted that there are no individuals who are currently MLAs sitting as members of the commission. There were individuals who had served as MLAs at one point in time in at least one of those cases.

While I'm on that point, we also saw a terrible blunder which had been made in Manitoba where the three members of the commission were all from the city of Winnipeg. The Chief Electoral Officer was quite ill at the time and I believe – Pat, correct me if I'm wrong – did not have the kind of input into the commission that the Chief Electoral Officer normally would have. The other two members were the president of the University of Manitoba and a judge from the superior court. Unfortunately, a number of errors were made in the rural areas in terms of boundaries, and they had to go back into revisions because they had crossed rivers where there were no bridges and done some things like that. So there is, at least in my mind, clearly a strong impetus to ensure that there is a mix of people on the commission from urban and rural parts of the province so you do have that blend.

MR. BEACH: Jerry Beach from Rycroft. I feel the commission should consist of citizens and with no MLAs, to take away the political interface that you see at even this particular hearing. Who those citizens are: you should have city and rural people and have those citizens put their input based on what your findings are and take it from there. I feel that the MLAs cannot look at in a commonsense, common people point of view, because you're too much of a political animal. That is not meant to be an insult.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not taken as such.

MR. SCHNEIDER: Terry Schneider from the town of Falher. That's right, and if you do put people on from the Legislative Assembly, it would be a reflection of the government that was in power at the time anyway, so that's not good for you. It is a problem.

MR. BEACH: I think this committee could show trust for the citizens of this great province we live in by doing that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else on this point?

MR. VAN BEERS: Mr. Chairman, just to comment on Mike's there for a second, it's hard to come here and have any proposals on how it should be set up. I mean I'm sure you people have studied it to death and more committees have studied it to death, and coming here, you know, mostly maybe as farmers, it's hard to suggest.

I'd like to suggest one thing. I can see what's going on in Fairview right now, and it's very scary as far as the business is concerned. I personally wouldn't care what is in the commission. I think the urban people should be very concerned what's happening in the rural, because, you know, the arms and the legs and the toes are starting to rot away; your heart will be soon gone too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What do you see happening in Fairview?

MR. VAN BEERS: Businesses closing up right now – right now. Dealerships. There was a big sale there since last week, and there are two dealerships apparently, farm equipment, that are going down. There's a lumberyard closing up in Fairview right now. Of course, they all have to live. I take it for granted, Bob, that where you come from you have a lot of farm people. I don't think I'm going to hurt anybody here. They're usually on the short end anyway. If we're going to have more representation taken away, I think it's going to be even worse, and I think in the long run the big cities are going to suffer, like Calgary and Edmonton and all those people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, what's sad: if any of you haven't done so, sometime when you're traveling in the states, and Montana is the state I'm most familiar with – I know that you have to go off the interstate highway to get into the towns, and that's a bit of an inconvenience, but do yourself a favour. Go off the interstate and into some of the towns like Choteau or Shelby and see what's happening. Talk to some of the people involved in local government across the line. I'll tell you it's really scary, because they've gone through a period where their emphasis has been on their urban centres. To our credit here, and I think the same can be said in the other western provinces, where we've had different political parties involved in managing the affairs at one time or another, there's been a different attitude about helping with the infrastructure in small communities: with water and sewer and such basic amenities. But, for instance, if we were living in Montana, if you're not on a very scenic ranch on a creek, you'd better be in a city, because there sure isn't much future in a town of anywhere from 1,000 to 5,000 or 10,000 population.

MR. VAN BEERS: That's right. And it's of course very scary for people in the city if they hear what the farmers are getting: millions and millions of dollars. But you spread that out, and every farmer might get \$100 or \$200, which is a drop in the bucket, which is not going to do anything for him. All it's going to do is buy beer for him so he can drown his sorrows. You know, it really doesn't mean anything. We really know that, but it sounds very big, listening to the radio and TV. But it's not curing anything, and it's getting worse, as we all know, by the year. It's getting worse.

So I personally think that the urban people should bloody well, if I could put it understandably, look after the rural people a little bit better. I originally am from Holland, and I think they might all be familiar with it. But down there that's exactly what's happened: the urban looks after the rural just to keep them alive; so they don't have to import stuff from all the other countries.

MR. MELNYK: Mr. Chairman, Mike Cardinal here asked what I thought the commission should consist of.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. You answer, and then we'll let Pat back in again.

MR. MELNYK: I think it should be of somebody that is knowledgeable in rural as well as urban areas. I don't know how you're going to do this, but somebody that's going to be . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's not just one person, Orist; it's a number of people.

MR. MELNYK: . . . broad minded. You can't take sides. You have to take into consideration Alberta as Alberta, not towns versus the rural area. Alberta for what it is; we are all one. Where we live doesn't really matter that much. That's where we choose to make our home. It's all one piece of cake. One without the other is no good.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat, and then I wonder if we have a brief. Glen, did you wish to make a brief or make some comments?

MR. CLEGG: Just a few comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A few comments? And then if we could have some wrap-up comments by panel members. We can go either way. We can either continue our dialogue like this or break from the official part of our meeting and have a coffee and juice and dialogue with one another one on one. I'll let you think about that, as to which approach you prefer.

Okay, Pat, do you want to go ahead?

MRS. BLACK: Yeah. Thank you, Bob. I just wanted to clarify something with Orist. I don't want you to leave thinking that urban members are not concerned about forestry and environment, et cetera. We probably have as many if not more questions on those very areas than anyone in the rural, because urban people traditionally have not been out to see the forests and the environmental concerns, so you not only go through an education process but also an explanation process. I wanted you to know that I am the vice-chairman of forestry and natural resources for the government caucus committee, so I as an urban member am very involved in forestry, as are many of our urban members. We find that we are equally as concerned about these areas as our rural friends, so it is a co-operation between urban and rural in all three caucuses.

MR. MELNYK: I didn't mean you personally.

MRS. BLACK: No, I know you didn't mean me personally, but what I wanted to stress to you is that urban members and rural members share their knowledge and their experiences through their caucus committees. That's something that's been a tremendous learning ground on both sides. Even on these tours those from the rural and those from the urban have gained so much from discussions just like this. It's been an extremely valuable year for us to have been on the road, and we do appreciate the information that you've shared with us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Pat.

Glen, would you like to make your concluding comments, and then we'll wrap up.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Bob. Certainly I'm not going to waste much time, except I want to thank the committee for coming back. Certainly I want to thank all the people who have

come and presented briefs and asked questions and listened. Like I said earlier, I made my presentation at the meeting in Peace River when they were first there. A grand total of three of us showed up. I don't blame anybody for that, but there was a little mix-up in the advertising and the notice that went out.

However, I have to still say that I'm very concerned. I think it has to be more than by population represented. I know there's a big argument to have fairer representation by population, but let me just take myself. I'm six and a half hours driving the speed limit and five hours and 35 minutes speeding all the way. I'm an hour to an hour and a half from any airport. When we go into session, which ran four months plus this year, every MLA in the city of Edmonton could do business, could go and see their constituency, between 5:30 in the afternoon when we adjourned to 8 o'clock at night, and I know there are many of them who did it. I also know that many of them could go and visit their constituency in the mornings. With the size of my constituency I could represent half the people in Edmonton and half in Lethbridge and it wouldn't be any more difficult for me. Now, just take that into consideration. That's what I'm doing in this constituency.

I'm not going to repeat it. The points were brought out. I have 125 elected local officials to deal with. I know there are a lot of local boards here, and they say, "You don't see me enough." When I spend an average of four hours on the road, if I try and get to some of these, you can see. Harry here mentioned going to Gundy. Well, I left at 9 o'clock in the morning and stopped at three people in Gordondale and went through B.C. into Gundy, came around by Grande Prairie. We're covering more area than the cities of Edmonton and Calgary by 10 times. I don't argue with population, but there absolutely have to be other factors. We've got to take in effective, and we have to use the word "fair." I'm so strong on fair representation.

That's all I want to say today, but certainly there can be a formula, and if it has to be a formula for rural, for urban, so be it. I don't really care what the judge has said. We'll challenge that decision. If you read the decision very carefully, maybe there are circumstances that can be looked at in extreme cases. I'm not speaking for myself; I'm talking for a large rural riding in northern Alberta. I can talk for Al Adair; I can talk for Pearl Calahasen; I can talk for Mike Cardinal. I'm not talking specifically for myself. I think that we have to, and the briefs here today have said that we have to look.

Tom made a point, and maybe so, that it's happened many times before that the governing party does not have the majority of the votes. Maybe that's not all fair. Maybe it is. I don't know. Certainly I know that this committee has a very difficult job. I have faith in them, and I know when they sit down to make their report, they will take everything possible into consideration.

Again, thank you for coming back, and thank you people for coming out again today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks for your brief, Glen.

Before I ask our members to sum up, which of the two approaches would you prefer? Do you want to carry on seated as we are now, or are you comfortable in breaking after our members have finished so we can have a coffee in the last few minutes and we can speak individually? I see a few heads nodding for the latter. Okay?

Yes?

MR. BOYD: I wouldn't mind making one quick comment before the panel if that's okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please do.

MR. BOYD: On the same concept as the fellow sitting next to me here, I think the infrastructures of the cities are being tremendously overtaxed as the increasing population occurs. I think you all understand what I mean by this, the disposal of water and everything. This has a snowballing effect. I think it's possibly because we can't provide effective representation in the country. There's a frustration there that is increasingly bringing the population to the cities. So if we can provide a fair and effective representation in the rural municipalities, we can keep this more even way of doing things. It's going to cost tremendously in the future to service the cities with this increasing taxation of the infrastructure. I guess that's all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Anyone else?

MR. VAN BEERS: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to comment to Pat here for a minute. She's the young lady here. Why not, eh? I'd rather talk to you than to Glen anyway.

MRS. BLACK: Okay.

MR. VAN BEERS: Pat, it's very good and it's excellent that you're representing the rural, you say, in forestry and environment.

MRS. BLACK: Urban.

MR. VAN BEERS: Urban, not the rural.

MRS. BLACK: Both.

MR. VAN BEERS: Both. Forestry and environment, very important. I'm with you all the way. There's a lot more out there than forestry and environment.

MRS. BLACK: Oh, yes. There's no question on that. I was just responding. Actually, I'm not on agriculture. Glen is on agriculture.

MR. VAN BEERS: This is what I mean, you know, that there's a lot more out there, and those are the people that are suffering right now, and they have suffered for years. We came here in the prime time from Ontario, as a good Liberal. Glen, I've finally told you the rest of the story. Now, I was at his party last Sunday.

MRS. BLACK: At least you saw the light.

MR. VAN BEERS: You know, in the prime time. But ever since it has gone down. We all know; we don't have to tell anybody what it is like out there. I still hear it on the radio. Over 70 percent of the farmers are 65 and over. Now, that must mean something. So, please, let's not shortchange the rural; let's see what we can do for the rural.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. Pat, want to sum up?

MRS. BLACK: Well, I'd just like to thank everyone for their hospitality and for having us. Again, we've learned something new, as we have at each hearing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. BRUSEKER: I think Orist said it all: we have to work as Albertans working together. It doesn't really matter where we live; we've got to work together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Frank.
Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I think I've said my piece. Pulp mills do give you gray hair.

MR. SIGURDSON: The comment that Orist made that I want to underscore is that we've all got to work together. I've heard in probably every community we've been in that some MLAs can drive through their constituencies in six hours and other MLAs could walk through their constituencies in 15 minutes. But the only problem is that if you were only driving through in six hours or walking through in 15 minutes and you didn't stop and talk to your constituents, you wouldn't be doing your job as a member of the Legislature. If we're going to try and represent people fairly and to some degree equitably, we've got to make sure that the underlying factor is those people that we represent, that they have our ears to the best possible and most convenient times available to them. That's what we, I think all of us, are trying to make sure, that we're going to effectively represent all Albertans regardless of where they live.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I would like to just thank the presenters for the time and effort that they spent preparing their briefs. They certainly will be well received and will be considered by the committee when they make recommendations on the composition of the commission and the redistribution rules.
Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much. The only thing I'd like to emphasize again is that there was a common thread in all of the briefs given to us today, and that's not unique to the hearings here in Rycroft. We've heard that in many parts of the province.

I'd also like to conclude by kind of pulling out an idea that you presented and expanding it a little bit. We've got the infrastructure in rural Alberta. We've got the roads. We've got the water and sewer systems. We've got the built-up community area. We've got empty spaces in our classrooms. We've got the hospitals. What we need are some more people. As you know, the government is working hard through Ray Speaker, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, on some initiatives on how we can turn around that current trend. Some of you will recall that back in the very early 1970s there were predictions that Alberta would soon become a province of two cities. That didn't happen. We had a lot of growth, and there was a lot of confidence. Okay, we've been hurt over the last number of years in rural areas. You mentioned the loss of dealerships in communities. Yes, we faced it throughout the province. I've seen a car dealership and an implement dealership close in the last eight months in my own home community, and that hurts. So what we have to do is find ways to stimulate growth not in an artificial sense but in a natural sense. There may be a role this committee can play in fostering that development as well.

Thank you all so very much for coming out, sharing your thoughts and ideas with us. I want to give you the reassurance – I don't think there's a person that'd be sitting at this table today if we believed that strictly rep by pop was the answer: one person, one vote. We know there are some unique factors, and we're all struggling trying to find a formula that's acceptable, that will be fair – that was a term used by Glen and others – and equitable but something that will as well withstand any court challenge using the Charter of Rights as a basis. We've got to have a reasoned approach, and that's what we're working on.

Thanks again for coming out. Let's stop and have a coffee.

[The committee adjourned at 3:51 p.m.]

