

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[2:04 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It's my pleasure to officially declare the public hearing of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries being held here in Westlock now open.

MR. APPLEBY: Are those mikes on?

MR. CHAIRMAN: These microphones are connected with *Hansard*, and that's for the written record. Of course, anyone who wishes a transcript of either the proceedings now or later for other hearings will be able to get it. Do we have a public address system in the hall?

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, we have this one here for the presenters.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If anyone else would like, there are several seats right in the front if you're having any difficulty hearing.

As mentioned, the microphones that are here are for *Hansard*. We don't want them to in any way intimidate anyone. We've been trying to keep our meetings very informal, and to that end we invite two or three presenters to come forward at a time. I'll give you an example of the process we follow. The first presenter would give their brief, members of the panel are then given an opportunity to ask questions, and then we throw it open to those of you in the public if there are questions or comments you'd like to add to the brief. Then we move on to number two and so on. So it's an attempt to keep the whole process moving. We're here to learn. We're here to gain input from you.

Before proceeding any further, I'd like to pause long enough to introduce the panel members who are with us today. On my immediate left is Mr. Pat Ledgerwood. Pat is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta. He's been involved in redistribution at both the federal and provincial levels. So he does bring a great deal of expertise to this process, and we're really delighted that he is part of our team.

On my immediate right is Mr. Frank Bruseker. Frank represents the constituency of Calgary-North West. He's a Liberal member of the Assembly, a first-time member, and has done a good job of getting out to the hearings across the province. Incidentally, this is hearing number 31 in our process. By the time we finish our work, we will have had 39 hearings across the province.

Seated next to Frank is Tom Sigurdson. Tom is the New Democratic member of the Assembly for Edmonton-Belmont. This is his second term as a member. Prior to becoming a member, he served as an executive assistant to the late Grant Notley, so rural Alberta is certainly something he's familiar with. In addition, when Mr. Notley sat on a previous Electoral Boundaries Commission, Tom was involved as his aide and has experience in that sense.

Next to Tom is Mike Cardinal, no stranger to this part of the province. Mike, as you know, is the MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. He's a first-time member of the Progressive Conservative Party, working hard for his constituency, and has again been a very active participant in this process.

There are several members of our committee who are not here today. Pam Barrett, the New Democratic House leader and an Edmonton member, is unable to be with us. Tom, I believe you're having a several-day caucus meeting.

MR. SIGURDSON: She'll be attending tonight in St. Albert.

MR. CHAIRMAN: She will be coming tonight in St. Albert.

Also Pat Black, a Progressive Conservative member for Calgary-Foothills, had intended to be with us today. However, her father became quite ill last evening and she called me about 10:15 and canceled her participation with us today.

Stockwell Day, who is the Conservative House Whip and a member for Red Deer, is unable to be with us. He had a family holiday scheduled at this time and is proceeding with that.

Other members I'd like to introduce today. Bob Pritchard, the senior administrator for our team. For those of you who have phoned into the office or had contact, in all likelihood it's been with Bob.

Ted Edwards is at the back of the room. Ted does all the work for Bob and Bob gets the credit, but I guess that's the way things go at that end.

Of course, we've got Gary Garrison and Doug over here from *Hansard*. They're assisting to ensure that there is a written record of the proceedings.

As I've previously said, our meetings are all public and there is a written record of what has been said not only in this community but in the other communities as well, so anyone who's interested certainly has access to that information.

My name is Bob Bogle. I'm the MLA for Taber-Warner, and I'm a member of the Conservative caucus.

As you know, we're going to give you a very brief overview at the beginning before we actually get into the briefs which are to be presented today. I've asked Mr. Ledgerwood if he would give an overview on the British Columbia court case, which really is the reason our all-party committee of our Legislature was struck. Once that's been done, Tom Sigurdson will lead us through a slide presentation giving you some background on the makeup of the constituencies in Alberta, showing the populations, and we'll also give other statistics. So before we actually get into the briefs, we'll try to ensure that everyone does have a comfortable level of understanding with the process we are involved in.

As you know, we're not actually drawing lines between constituencies, so if any of you have points in your briefs pertaining to a community being added to a constituency or deleted from a constituency, that's not the sort of thing our committee will be looking at as such. When the commission is struck, Mr. Ledgerwood will of course be a member of the commission as the Chief Electoral Officer. We've given the assurance in other parts of the province that any portions of briefs which deal with matters relating to where boundaries should be will be passed on to the commission, so those matters may be brought to their attention at that time.

The other point I'd like to make about briefs is that if you do have a lengthy brief, it's not necessary to read it word for word. If you'd like to highlight parts of it, if you'd like to expand on another area, feel free to do that. We will take the written brief as presented and ensure that it's read into *Hansard*. As well, through the use of a computer, we are trying to identify the key elements in each brief, so that when we sit down to actually write our report, we can draw from that how many briefs emphasized taking into consideration the number of communities in a constituency when drawing boundaries or how many have said that we should be looking at representation by population as the sole factor. We'll be able to pull out all those factors, because obviously we're not going to be able to remember all the things that occurred in the various meetings which have covered some considerable period of time. So we will be relying on the electronic process to assist us in that way.

We will be submitting a brief this fall. It is our intent upon completing the brief to make it public. That was one of the amendments agreed to by the Assembly this spring or summer, and we'll make the document public. The Assembly will then reconvene so that we have an opportunity to debate it, and then of course action will have to be taken in a legislative sense on the new legislation and on the creation of the new Electoral Boundaries Commission. One of the things you may have some thoughts on and may wish to address today is the makeup of the commission, as to who should be on it, any concerns you have as to adequate representation to ensure urban and rural Alberta are both represented and so on.

So without any further comment in an introductory sense, I'm now going to ask Mr. Ledgerwood if he'd like to lead us through the background of the British Columbia court case, which really is the reason we're here, and upon completion of that, we'll go over to Tom for presentation of the slides. Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Normally a boundary commission is struck after every second general election, so we had the 1986 general election and the 1989 general election on our current boundaries of the 83 electoral divisions. That commission is normally struck at the first session following the general election. The impact of the B.C. court case, which I'll brief you on, resulted in this committee being struck, and as the chairman has indicated, they will be tabling the report later this fall.

The situation in B.C. was such that they had electoral divisions that ranged in population from just over 5,500 to over 68,000. So the government looked at this through a commission, the Fisher commission which was appointed in April 1987, and they submitted a report in December 1988. Basically what the Fisher commission recommended was that they eliminate the dual-member ridings in British Columbia, which doesn't impact on us, and they increase the number of MLAs from 69 to 75, which really doesn't impact on us. What does impact on us is that they recommended there be equal weight to each elector and the total population of British Columbia be divided by 75 to give them an average and all the electoral divisions be within plus or minus 25 percent of that average. The government accepted the report, and it was challenged by a Professor Dixon. It was heard by the Chief Justice of the B.C. Superior Court, Chief Justice Madam McLachlin. She basically agreed with the provisions in the Fisher commission report. The key one we're interested in, again, is the plus or minus 25 percent of an average.

The government still didn't react to the McLachlin decision, so Professor Dixon and his group went back to court again. It was heard by a Justice Meredith. Justice Meredith agreed with Justice McLachlin's decision. He also indicated that the courts were not part of government, that they could not dissolve the government and act as legislators and that it was up to the B.C. government. If they were going to change the electoral division boundaries, it would be a government decision. The government made that decision, and in 1989 appointed a commission. The commission basically adopted the Fisher report with minor changes, and effective in January of this year it was established that British Columbia would have 75 electoral divisions, that they would have an average of plus or minus 25 percent. So the next general election in British Columbia will use those new boundaries.

One of the things that happened on the McLachlin decision was that when the British Columbia government reviewed the decision, they did not appeal it. We felt it would have been better had they appealed it. Now, the fact that Madam Justice

McLachlin has been elevated to the Supreme Court of Canada may or may not have had a bearing on that; we have no idea. So with that background, you can see why this commission was struck.

Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Pat. Any questions of Mr. Ledgerwood on the British Columbia court case?

Okay, Tom, let's go ahead with the slides, please.

MR. SIGURDSON: I think, Mr. Chairman, we'll just wait a moment or two and make sure we've got the slides up and the lights off. This is the opportunity of the matinee performance. As the chairman said, we've had 31 meetings. Perhaps to help with the government deficit, we should start selling popcorn at some of these slide presentations. Anyway, on with the slide presentation.

The first slide is a list of all the constituencies in our province of Alberta in alphabetical order. The next slide is, again, all 83 constituencies. This time what we've done is put them in numerical order from highest to lowest, so the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud at 36,536 is the largest and the constituency of Cardston at 8,105 is the smallest in terms of voter population. There is a footnote attached to the Cardston constituency. As you may be aware, we list our constituencies by voter population, the enumerated voter. In the last enumeration the Blood Indian Band, which is wholly contained in the Cardston constituency, chose to not participate in the enumeration. It's estimated that they may have approximately 1,800 voters that are absent from the Cardston enumeration lists, so the figures are somewhat skewed.

In the next slide we've taken all the names on the voters list. We have approximately one and a half million. We divide that by the 83 constituencies in our province. If we follow the Fisher recommendation of having a voter population variance of plus or minus 25 percent, you'll see that we have a top end of 23,356 and a bottom end for a low of 14,014 voters. We'd be able to range inside that. Returning, then, to the list of constituencies in order of their voter population, you'll see those constituencies that are coloured in green have a voter population greater than 25 percent and those constituencies that are coloured in pink have a voter population of less than 25 percent. Putting it on a map of our province, you can see that those constituencies that have a voter population of less than 25 percent are all in rural Alberta and they're throughout the province. There are two green dots there that you can probably just barely make out — I'm showing constituencies over 25 percent — and one is the city of Medicine Hat and the other is St. Albert.

On the map of Calgary you can see that growth is on the periphery of the city. Where the city is growing there are a number of constituencies coloured in green. Again, these have a voter population greater than 25 percent.

It's pretty much the same thing with the city of Edmonton. Constituencies that have a voter population greater than 25 percent are pretty much on the periphery of the city, the areas in the city that are still growing.

Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West fall very nicely within the average, and they're probably the only urban area contained wholly. If you take a look at the next . . . I'm sorry; we'll get to Red Deer in a second, but Lethbridge is quite all right.

The Medicine Hat constituency: again, very large in terms of voter population, and it's only a single constituency in the city.

The constituencies of Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South. In the 1983 boundary redistribution there was a single con-

stituency of Red Deer, and it was very large, one of the largest in the province. The commission met to look at redistribution. They had to deal with Red Deer as it was too large. If they divided it in two, there wasn't sufficient population inside the city boundary to really justify two constituencies. So what we have is: the brown line on the slide is the boundary for the city of Red Deer and the black outline is the boundaries for the constituencies. What they had to do was go into the county of Red Deer and find sufficient numbers of people to bring up the numbers to justify two constituencies for Red Deer.

Again, the city of St. Albert is very large. It had much of the Sturgeon area prior to the last redistribution, and even reducing it just to the city of St. Albert, it's still grown quite a bit and is very large in terms of voter population.

Again we return to the map of the province. These constituencies that are highlighted in purple are constituencies that have a voter population of 35 percent below the average. The next map is again a map of the province, and it shows those constituencies, all of them in southern Alberta, that have a voter population 50 percent below the average.

These are the additional hearings that were scheduled to accommodate all the presentations that have been requested. We've had a good number of hearings. I think the next map will show where we've had public hearings in the province and where we're going to have public hearings. We've all had quite a tour around our province and have received a number of submissions. What we have tried to do is make sure that in those areas that have constituencies that have populations very far below the average, we've tried to get into those constituencies to hear from the Albertans that may be most affected.

One of the considerations we have as this committee sits is whether or not we should be conducting redistribution based on enumeration or on total population. Some jurisdictions have boundaries decided based on the fact of total population. In Alberta we base our boundaries on just the voter population. The total population makes a bit of a difference in that we as members of the Legislature represent all Albertans and a number of people that come into Canada and have landed immigrant status aren't eligible to vote. There are a number of people that . . . For example, in the Cardston constituency we had people that chose not to be enumerated; there are religious communities that choose not to participate in the electoral process. Then there are all those people we spend a great deal of money on in providing them with education, those people that are under the age of 18. They are not considered in the drawing up of constituency boundaries. So what happens is that if you take the total population and divide it by the 83 constituencies, you end up with a population average of 28,500. Again, if you factor in the plus or minus 25 percent permitted variance, you have a top end of 35,600 and a low end of 21,300. It makes a bit of a difference. Again, that's based on a 1986 population census. That's the most current population census we've got for the total population.

We've taken that colour chart and again applied the colours. There are now 19 constituencies that have a population of 25 percent more than the average and 18 constituencies that have less than the 25 percent average. But you can see that whereas Cardston used to be at the very bottom, if you factor in total population, it moves up into the top one-third of the lower end of the constituencies. So there is a significant movement of population.

If you recall, on the last map, when we showed those constituencies that had populations over 25 percent, there were only two, Medicine Hat and St. Albert, but now if we factor in the

population, we see that we have the constituency of Grande Prairie, a rural designated constituency, and Fort McMurray that would take their population over the 25 percent average.

The city of Calgary. Under the enumeration there were nine constituencies that were over 25 percent, but if you take in a population factor consideration, it drops down to seven constituencies.

Edmonton. With the enumeration figures alone we had eight constituencies that were over the 25 percent average. With the population factor we have seven constituencies that are over 25 percent.

Using the map of Alberta again, when we had the previous map that showed those constituencies 35 percent under the average, we had 16 when we only used enumeration, and if we used total population, we dropped that down to 12. Most significant, though, is that if you recall, we had five constituencies when we just used voter population; if we use total population, we only have one constituency, and that's Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, that would have a total population that falls 50 percent below the average. So it's a significant change in the considerations.

What we've had since the committee was struck in the First Session of the 22nd Legislature: we've worked a great deal together; we've spent a great deal of time together traveling. We've traveled looking at other jurisdictions, how they've handled their electoral process and redistribution. We've traveled to Winnipeg, Regina, and Victoria. Public hearings: we've had a good number of public hearings throughout the province. We've had to head back two and three times to some locations. There's a list of all the places we've had public hearings at. We've had a total of 674 people attend these public hearings, with 284 giving presentations and an additional 115 written submissions, so there is some good deal of concern about the redistribution of the electoral boundaries in our province.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that concludes the slide presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom. Anything any other panel member wishes to add? Any questions or comments from anyone present?

All right. Bob, I think we're ready to proceed, then, with the first two or three briefs.

MR. PRITCHARD: If I could ask the three presenters to come up, please. They are Sheena Stewart, Peter Stasiuk, and John MacIntyre.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd normally start with Sheena, but she requested that she go a bit later. So, John, how would it be if we start with your end of the table, and then Peter and then Sheena?

MR. MacINTYRE: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I guess I'll stay seated if that's quite all right. I'm here representing nobody except myself. I just want to make that clear. I'm sure the things I have to say you've heard all over the place, but I wasn't there. So I'd like to say a few things I have in mind, and that's the difference between rural and population-dense centres, of course. The difference on average of 25 percent in my opinion is not really enough. That 25 percent is too small a difference.

We look at our rural MLAs and of course many local governments look to them for guidance: towns, villages, hamlets, MDs, counties, school boards, hospital boards. There are so many organizations too numerous to mention, of course. And

there are the airports, the highways, and thousands of miles of roads. There are rivers, forests, farmers and farms, fair boards, churches, hall boards, and many, many other things, and rural MLAs are looked to for guidance. When we have something to say, we have to go to them and tell them our names. I think when we look at the dense populations, the big populations, and look at Alberta as a whole, the densely populated places are a very small part of the whole mass of Alberta. The other places, of course, the densely populated places – I would say there's a lot more people, and I would think they haven't got nearly as much to look after as the rural MLAs. Therefore, I really believe that the 25 percent is not enough of a difference.

These are my own ideas, and if you would consider them, I would appreciate it very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, John.

First of all, any questions by panel members of John? Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. MacIntyre, thanks for your presentation. I'm wondering, sir, if you could tell me what you think would be a fair percentage as a guideline then.

MR. MacINTYRE: It's pretty hard for me to set out a fair percentage. I would think a lot of it would have to go by the amount of organizations and places there are. Like this is a fairly densely populated area here, and there are many, many things to do. But in some of the far-flung ones, I would think you'd have to go a lot by the amount of roads the person would have to look at, the amount of miles he has to travel to see all his people, and the amount of villages and hamlets and populations and so on. I would think in some of these far-flung rural ridings maybe 40 percent wouldn't be too much.

MR. SIGURDSON: Can I just ask one further question, sir? On this map, if you recall it, those constituencies that are highlighted in yellow are constituencies that have less than 50 percent of the total population. Peace River and Fort McMurray, just for your information, fall within the average, and they're very large, as you can see. If we were to take perhaps even three of these constituencies in the bottom that fall under 50 percent, they wouldn't fill the area or the mass of one constituency in the north. Have you any advice for the committee on how we'd redistribute?

MR. MacINTYRE: This, I guess, is exactly what I was talking about when I said you certainly would have to look into the amount of people and the amount of miles and work that MLA would have. Of course, those small ridings with a small population – I don't think that's quite right. I don't think it's fair. A bit larger ones: I think that Peace River man must have a hell of a pile of work to do in his riding.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Any other comments or questions from the audience to John?

Just before we move on to the second presenter, John, as I mentioned, two days ago we were in Rycroft. There were five briefs presented in Rycroft, and the theme of all five was on your point. Of course, Rycroft being in the northwest part of the province in the Dunvegan constituency, the distance from Edmonton and the sparsely populated areas was the key concern in that area. It doesn't make our job any easier as a committee, as Tom has pointed out and others, but this is one of the

reasons we're here, to see the kind of concerns that you have and the things you believe we should take into consideration when writing our report.

Thanks, John.

MR. MacINTYRE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Peter.

MR. STASIUK: Okay. First of all, I'd like to thank the panel for choosing Westlock so it can hear our voice.

Mr. Chairman, panel members, ladies and gentlemen, the council for the municipal district of Westlock wishes to express its opinion regarding the current provincial electoral boundaries review being conducted and the potential shift in representation in favour of urban Alberta. While it is recognized that representation by population is an important principle, it should not be the only factor considered in reviewing constituency boundaries. Consideration should be given to social, economic, and geographic factors. Rural Alberta has a character and life-style unique from that of urban Alberta, and in fact each rural community is unique unto itself with regard to ethnic backgrounds, goals, objectives, and aspirations. Given the current size of many rural constituencies, rural MLAs are already being put in the position of having to choose on certain issues or which group of their constituents they support to the detriment of another group. An example is one community or another. We can only make it to one function in one community, so we've got to make a choice there: one municipality over another.

Should the outcome of the review result in an increase in rural constituency sizes and a decrease in rural representation, there would be, most assuredly, a decrease in the rural standard of living over time as well as a negative impact on the rural character and social fabric. Although it may be of some questionable relevance, any such shift in representation would also be in conflict with the government policy regarding administrative and bureaucratic decentralization. In an economy that is so reliant on agriculture and natural resources, both of which are rural based, it is imperative that an equitable balance of representation be maintained. With all due respect, an example: an urban-oriented perspective without benefit of the rural grass-roots presence could result in decisions made for the short-term economic advantage to the detriment of environmental and long-term economic advantages. Conversely, economic advantage could be lost in the light of possible inaccurate environmental considerations.

Because of the size of rural constituencies, rural MLAs already find it difficult to visit remote areas and parts of their respective constituencies in order to gather constituents' opinion and obtain a feel for the grass-roots attitude on current issues. Any increase in rural constituency size would only serve to augment and accentuate that difficulty.

In summation, the opinion of the council for the municipal district of Westlock is that the interests of all Albertans would be best served by maintaining the current rural/urban relationship in terms of representation. This opinion is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Peter.

Any questions? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, we've experienced something that's not unique to Alberta but certainly is happening all over North America, and that's rural depopula-

tion. We have a migration of people that are moving off the farm into small rural communities and perhaps even out of some of the rural communities into the large urban centres. The current split in Alberta is suggested to be 60 percent urban, 40 percent rural, and there are other figures that suggest other, greater differences. We have right now 42 urban seats and 41 rural seats, which is pretty much 50-50.

Is there a point in that migration pattern, if we see continued rural depopulation, where you would say, well, it's now 70-30, it's 65-35 – maybe the ratio ought to change? Or are you forever fixed on 50-50?

MR. STASIUK: Well, I'd think what we're looking at is that we in rural Alberta are important people.

MR. SIGURDSON: Indeed.

MR. STASIUK: We are the suppliers of resources, we are the suppliers of food, and I think a shift, if it goes 75 urban and 25, we have less say, which means the constituencies get bigger, we have less contact or maybe it takes longer to contact our MLAs because of size, and when it comes into – well, let's go back to the money. When the money pie is there and the pie is cut up, where will it flow? I think all people are important and I think all people should be represented, because we in rural Alberta are the life of urban people as far as food and natural resources, because everything from the rural areas goes into the urban areas.

MR. SIGURDSON: So you would never change the ratio?

MR. STASIUK: Well, we would have to look at it, you know. We'd have to be convinced.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions, of panel members first? Sheena, did you have a question?

MS STEWART: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Questions from the audience, or a comment? Yes.

MRS. KINE: Mr. Chairman, I just have a few comments to back up Peter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MRS. KINE: Since Alberta was settled by people coming here to take up homesteads and farm, agriculture is our major industry, and that is in very difficult times right now. Alberta needs a stronger knowledge or representation from rural areas, especially in these difficult times. Without the present balance, a major departure from the balance – political advantage would shift to large cities. Rural and small urban Alberta communities would probably [inaudible], and we'd all lose in the end.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Anyone else? Okay; then we'll move on to Sheena.

MS STEWART: Thank you very much. As with Mr. MacIntyre, who is today representing someone who is a member of the constituency, I'm here today because I have some very real

concerns regarding the possible reallocation of electoral boundaries. I think there's a very real danger in taking seats away from the rural areas, especially in a situation like this.

We've looked at your charts and we've looked at your maps, and we've seen that a large number of areas that would be receiving more seats are in the areas of Edmonton and Calgary. Now, in reality Edmonton and Calgary are the ones who would benefit the most by this decision, and the rural areas are being asked to make a sacrifice for their benefit. I think that would be something that's hard to swallow for most rural areas throughout the province, seeing as how Calgary and Edmonton are, in our view, and I think in the view of a lot of other people, probably the two wealthiest areas in the province. The possibility of a problem in a situation like this is something similar to the situation that presently exists in Manitoba, where the city of Winnipeg currently holds over 50 percent of the seats of the Legislature for that province. Now, although this hasn't been a problem as of late, the danger does lie there that a government could be formed entirely out of the urban areas with absolutely no rural representation at all. I think this is a danger that's very real and something that rural Albertans have to think about.

Should this occur, rural constituents would suffer immeasurably. The urban growth perspectives are incredibly different; they're diverse. Nobody who is coming from the city can understand the concerns and worries that face rural constituents. I think that's why we deserve and need to have the amount of representation we have right now. Under no circumstance in the near future, in [inaudible] Mr. Sigurdson's comments, could I see this 50-50 split being changed. He had mentioned that we are seeing a flow of people moving into the cities, and this is true. But I think by allowing more power to the large urban areas, we're only going to make this problem worse. If people are feeling that their problems can't be represented in the rural constituencies, there may very well be a force that drives them into the cities in order to feel like they have some power over the government of their province.

Now, at present the situation – and I'm not sure; this is probably a point that's been mentioned before – to me, bears a striking resemblance to the problem we're having with Senate reform as a western province dealing with Ontario and Quebec. For years we've been complaining about the fact that these densely populated areas have held most of the power in the Senate, yet if we allow the urban centres in Alberta to take over some of the seats that we now hold as rural constituencies, aren't we in effect allowing the same thing to happen to us? We're losing our power, and it's the one thing we've fought against Ottawa and Quebec for letting them do to us. How can we let our own province do that to us again?

Recently Alberta Agriculture reports noted that one in three Alberta jobs is either directly or indirectly reliant on the rural economy. We're a vast and important resource to urban Alberta, and we deserve to have this representation.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Sheena.

Questions by panel members?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes. Sheena, would you subscribe basically to the theory that majority vote rules?

MS STEWART: I think when you have the majority vote rule, you're looking at a very dangerous situation once again. There have been circumstances throughout history where we've seen the problem of tyranny of the majority. The situation as it

stands now allows for protection of the minority in the situation of rural Albertans, and I think it's something that should stand the way it is.

MR. SIGURDSON: So you're saying that there are exceptions to majority rule?

MS STEWART: I think there are.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? I can't believe how quiet Frank and Mike are today. It's not always that way at our hearings.

All right. Any other comments or questions of Sheena from the audience?

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out that when you consider the cities of Edmonton and Calgary and other towns and cities, the rural representatives are already greatly outnumbered. You've got St. Albert, Red Deer, Camrose, and so on, so I think the balance of influence is already with the towns and cities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But, to be clear, in the current split, which is 42 urban and 41 rural, the 42 urban seats include St. Albert, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, and Lethbridge along with Calgary and Edmonton and several other constituencies like Camrose. In other words, it's not 42 seats in Calgary and Edmonton and 41 in the rest of the province. There was a long-standing unofficial formula used in Alberta that looked at an urban riding having seven electors and a rural riding having four. Then, of course, there was a determination as to when a constituency ceases to be rural and becomes urban. Some areas are deemed to be urban in terms of the Act definition that one or two redistributions ago were rural.

The other thing that's important to remember is that we have not had a static 42-41 split since 1905. There has been a slow and gradual shift, as the population of the urban centres has increased, to more urban seats.

The only other comment I want to make in that area – and this is to show how statistics can be used in a way that is confusing or misleading. A number of sociologists determined that anytime a community's population passes the 1,000 mark, it ceases to be a rural area and becomes classified as an urban area. Well, this community, then, is an urban centre. I look at the largest town in my constituency, Taber, with 6,400 people, officially an urban centre, but I assure you, it's rural in every sense of the word, as is Westlock. Its roots are rural, but it depends on where your definition lies. If you take every community that passes the 1,000 mark and shift it over from the rural population base to an urban base . . . We put out a white paper as a government some years ago on social policy, and unfortunately that was one of the traps we fell into in predicting what would happen in the future. A number of communities are predicted to have a population that will push them over the 1,000 mark. They immediately cease being called rural and are classified as urban, so you get what appears to be a further migration away from rural areas.

Anyone else? Yes, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Bob, I have just a general question for the presenters. As a rural MLA north of this town and a former

municipal councillor, I fully understand and appreciate the concerns brought forward by the presenters. The person that used the central Canada concept, with the Senate and Ottawa and Quebec: the regional disparities that exist in Canada already exist to a certain extent in Alberta, with the larger centres where the standard of living is considerably higher than others. I believe, you know, that those presentations are very, very valid and good points. When the commission is set up, to make it fair for all Albertans in the makeup of the commission, who would you feel should be on the commission and possibly how many members, and what should be the time line to determine how Alberta is shaped in the future? Basically, anyone could . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: To be fair, Mike, possibly we should share the makeup of the past commission.

MR. CARDINAL: Sure. Go ahead. Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The past commission was chaired by a judge in the province of Alberta. The makeup of the commission consisted of the Chief Electoral Officer, four Members of the Legislative Assembly, three of whom were government and one was opposition, and one citizen at large, who was an Edmontonian. So there was a mix of urban and rural on the past commission. I should also point out that when we visited the legislators in the other three western provinces, we found that in each and every case there were no sitting MLAs as members of their commissions. In some cases they had former MLAs, but they didn't have any active, current MLAs sitting on their commissions.

One further observation, and it's something that we will ensure we stay away from. In Manitoba there was a three-member commission chaired by a senior judge in the province, and the other two members were the president of the University of Manitoba and the Chief Electoral Officer for the province. Regrettably, the Chief Electoral Officer was quite ill at the time and was not able to carry out his duties as he should have. All three of the members were residents of the city of Winnipeg, and there were a lot of concerns after their initial report that some very basic mistakes had been made in the rural areas. Therefore, in their final report corrections had to be made. So I think that reinforced the point with most if not all of us that there must be a good balance on the commission of people from rural as well as urban Alberta.

But let's go back to Mike's question, which he wanted to pose, I think, to the three presenters, and then receive input from anyone else.

Yes, John.

MR. MacINTYRE: I think that's exactly the question I was going to ask you, Mr. Chairman, about who was on the last one when they changed the boundaries. It sounds all right to me, except I think there should have been somebody rural on it. I think there should be, possibly on the next one, somebody from a rural area somewhere.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat, do you want to comment?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We did have a rural member. Former Lieutenant Governor Ralph Steinhauer was on the commission initially, and then he became ill, and he was replaced by an Edmontonian.

MR. SIGURDSON: Two of the members of the Legislature were rural, and in fact Justice Dixon, while he resided in Calgary, came from a rural background.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I might add, though, that we've had briefs that have suggested to us that the MDs and Cs and the AUMA should have input, and possibly the improvement districts, in terms of the makeup of the commission. So there have been other briefs presented with ideas on the commission makeup itself.

Anyone else?

MR. STASIUK: Yeah. I think that would be a very good idea, if you could get a member from the AAMDC and the urban association of towns and cities and so forth, because they do represent us throughout the province of Alberta. Their voice is our voice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sheena.

MS STEWART: I agree with both of the other presenters. My only concern would be with what you've mentioned, that there was rural representation on there. I would like to see more of an attempt to make sure that it's a 50-50 split between urban and rural interests that are being represented.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? All right. Thank you.

MR. CARDINAL: Bob, the other question I had was the time line. What could you see as a reasonable time line for the actual hearing and redrafting of Alberta constituencies?

MR. STASIUK: Mike, would this be public again, these final hearings?

MR. CARDINAL: Yes, I suspect it will be. Yeah.

MR. STASIUK: I sure wouldn't want to see it in the busy time of harvest or spring work, you know. Winter probably would be about the best.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I recall that we normally deal with those matters in the legislation, and the House is committed to go back in this fall to deal with this committee's report. Then the legislation has to be passed and the commission struck. So the commission would be working through a good part of the next calendar year bringing its report in and again the Legislature dealing with the report.

Okay. Anyone else? Is there anything else, Mike?

MR. CARDINAL: No, that's it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thanks very much. Bob.  
Can everyone hear all right? Okay; good.

MR. PRITCHARD: We have one final presenter this afternoon, Frank Appleby.

MRS. APPLEBY: He didn't keep quiet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I know everyone in the room knows Frank Appleby as a former member of the Assembly for Athabasca. We've had other former members make presenta-

tions, and we've appreciated that.  
Frank.

MR. APPLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the board. I was going to say ladies and gentlemen, but it's unfortunate that Pam Barrett and Pat Black are not able to be with us. They also are urban members of the Legislature. It's always useful that this can be heard by urban members as well.

I certainly appreciate the fact that you are all in a very difficult position. I have seen this type of procedure from both sides of the fence, and I know the difficulties you're going to have to face to come up with a fair and equitable sort of solution. Definitely, no matter how much we all appreciate the fact that a great deal of work will go into your efforts, there are bound to be in the end some people that will be not completely happy with the results. But we know that a committee such as you have here, Mr. Chairman, will certainly put a lot of effort into it.

I have to follow up on what has been said by the three members before me, and they were emphasizing very, very strongly the fact about the necessity for continuing fair representation for rural areas of Alberta. That is certainly something that all of us are concerned about. I notice that in your covering letter, the one that was distributed today and the one that we had previously, you had seven points mentioned in there that you would be considering. I was pleased that your seventh point was something that more or less said that if we've forgotten anything, we're going to think about that too, because you're probably going to hear a number of things at these kinds of meetings which are going to be something that you will be able to take part in.

Peter Stasiuk mentioned that in looking at constituency boundaries, you should be considering economic, social, and geographic factors, and also in the considerations in your letter you mentioned geographic and demographic ones. I think also to add to that list you might put down transportation and communication, because those are very important ones, too, and those have to be considered.

I'm going to be more specific, because I think the three people that came before me have emphasized very well the need for continuing satisfactory rural representation in their Legislature. But you are going to be looking at various parts of the province which, according to your figures that you've given us and the ones that Tom has explained very well, demonstrate some of the difficulties that you're going to have to consider. You'll find, as has been mentioned, that down in the southern part of the province you have a number of constituencies, five or six or whatever it is there, that are certainly considerably below the average. A factor you might like to take into consideration in those kinds of areas is: how far are they from the capital city? It's very convenient for a member who represents the city of Edmonton or a surrounding area to get home to their constituency even during the sessions when they're on. Quite often, I remember, when I was in there, I would be here in Westlock in an evening because there was some sort of function or meeting or something I wanted to attend to, and back in the Assembly the next day. So I think some consideration has to be given in that respect to those people who come five or six hours away by road or something like that who do not have suitable plane connections so they can get back to their constituency in a convenient way. Certainly something like that has to be considered.

Here, I think, to be more specific still, we have to be looking



at northeastern Alberta. That's what I want to really mention. We have a difficulty there, as you show from the figures, in the constituency of St. Paul, which is considerably below the required criteria. You have Bonnyville, which is slightly above the criteria. Also, going down a little further south, I think you have to consider that the city of St. Albert is growing at a tremendous rate, and although these are 1989 figures, you would find if an enumeration was taken today, and I'm fully confident of this, that the somewhat bedroom communities of the city of Edmonton like Bon Accord, Gibbons, and Morinville have increased considerably since even that enumeration was done. So you're going to have a difficulty there.

Now, what I am suggesting to you is that in order to strike that balance in northeastern Alberta with Bonnyville and St. Paul, you take a good look at the town of Lac La Biche and include that in that area and give some consideration to moving those boundaries around. The town of Lac La Biche then would give you the needed extra electoral population that you need, and that could be adjusted accordingly. If you take Lac La Biche out of the Athabasca-Lac La Biche constituency, of course - Athabasca at the present time I think is some 91 voters below the criteria - you would have to be looking at something to replace Lac La Biche and give it a few more voters. I think that what you're going to have to be looking at is down in the St. Albert-Morinville-Bon Accord area. Some adjustments will have to be made, whether it has to be another constituency or total redistribution down there. But I believe that the town of Westlock could very well fit back into the Athabasca constituency.

You know, Westlock has a history of being kind of a forlorn sort of a place. They were in Pembina constituency at one time, and then they were in the Athabasca constituency. Now they're in the Westlock-Sturgeon constituency. I've always thought, about boundary commissions in the past, you know, that geographic factors or transportation factors are so highly important. It seems to me that some of those commissions years ago - I'm talking about before the present government was in office - would say, "Well, we need more people, so we'll take this town and put it in," without regard to these other factors I've been talking about. So I would suggest that you might look at putting Westlock and Athabasca into the same constituency. It would be a nice, compact one. I know; I represented it for 15 years, and it worked very well. So that was what I wanted to get at. I know it's awkward to move total communities around like that, but it has to be done.

Somebody mentioned something about the vast size, I think, of the Peace River constituency and the Fort McMurray constituency. This is true. But when we look at those huge areas as you have them on that map and see all that big space there, you have to remember that every part of Alberta has to be included in some constituency, and you have a number of isolated communities in those areas. It's not as though it is totally scattered all over the place; you have these specific communities. Like you go from Fort McMurray north, and the next place you come to is Fort Chip practically right on the border there. So those constituencies, although they look ominous, are not really that specific as far as your population centres are concerned.

What I'm suggesting to you is: you should be looking at some redistribution in northeastern Alberta; you're going to be having to look at something in the St. Albert, Morinville, Bon Accord area. And I would certainly say that if you do decide to suggest that Lac La Biche should be moved, then of course Westlock

would be the ideal community to come back in with the Athabasca constituency and make a nice, compact constituency.

I think that is all. I intend to make a written presentation to you. I just wanted to hear what's going to be said today. I'll put it all together and give it to you before the end of the month. I think that's the deadline, isn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you.

Questions? Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

Thanks very much for your presentation, Mr. Appleby. It's good to see you.

One of the matters that this committee may take into consideration is the frequency of redistribution. Other jurisdictions have redistribution: some had it every five years, some every 10 years. In Alberta we've got it after every second election. With the population changes that are quite significant - you point out a number of bedroom communities: Bon Accord, Gibbons, a number of others in and around the larger urban centres - do you think that perhaps Alberta ought to consider redistribution after every campaign or somewhat more frequently than after every second campaign?

MR. APPLEBY: I suppose it would be awkward to specify a certain number of years. Actually, you could be as far as eight or nine years between redistribution the way the present system works, and that is quite a considerable length of time. It might be something your committee could take into consideration in that respect. I would be inclined to think that the way population shifts are taking place as you mentioned, it might be more appropriate to have more frequent redistribution.

MR. SIGURDSON: Another area I'd like you to consider is that all previous redistribution commissions have operated without a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which we now have. Whether rightly or wrongly, we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it's been a matter that's been before the courts, which is why this committee has been struck and why we are here. If there's going to be redistribution and it's going to have to take into account the Charter factor, do you think we should be following the lead that British Columbia and Saskatchewan and Manitoba have taken, or do you think this is something that you would risk a court challenge on?

MR. APPLEBY: I have serious misgivings myself, personally, about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. My own personal opinion is - and I don't have to look for votes; I can say anything I want, you know, right now - that I think that particular piece of legislation is being abused by the courts to some extent, and I'm not happy about that. I think I would certainly be prepared to face court challenges. Let's fight this thing out and get something settled about what the governments are responsible for and what the courts are responsible for.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Appleby. Just a quick question. You advocate again maintaining basically the 42-41 split that we have right now. The question I'd put to you then, sir, is simply this. In the largest constituency, Edmonton-Whitemud, there are 31,000 voters; they get to send one MLA



to the Legislature. You take any three of the smallest 10 and they get to send three MLAs for a similar population. How would you address that?

MR. APPLEBY: I would look at that as – you know, if I was going to have to be an MLA in this day and age, I would much sooner represent Edmonton-Whitemud than three rural constituencies. I mean, those people in there, they can get to any part of their constituency in 20 minutes, whereas as I mentioned earlier, if you're going to Cardston or Pincher Creek or Macleod, you're five or six hours away. So I don't think myself there's any hang-up about having those kinds of constituencies.

MR. BRUSEKER: So you don't believe that everyone should have equal representation then?

MR. APPLEBY: Well, what do you call equal representation? I mean to say, it's the type of representation you get in the Legislature. Now, if you can get to your constituency within a few minutes and get back in, you could probably represent it a lot better than somebody who is 400 or 500 miles away and wants to represent it too. So I think your people in those large urban constituencies are getting much fairer representation, perhaps, in some cases than those isolated small rural constituencies.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Yes, Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Mr. Appleby, have you thought about the anomaly that we have? For example, we talked about Fort McMurray, where the city itself contains 90-some percent of the electors. It looks now like Fort McMurray, the city, could almost change from the classification of rural to urban. Do you think maybe we're getting hung up on urban and rural? Examples: Grande Prairie, Camrose; there are many cities that represent the rural area and they're still called rural, when in actual fact I think . . . For example, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray possibly could be called urban and have a separate member to represent the city and then another member to represent the perimeter areas.

MR. APPLEBY: Well, you'd certainly be increasing the number of members drastically that way. Actually, looking at what you told us about British Columbia, for instance, the province of British Columbia has a considerably greater population than the province of Alberta, and yet they may be going from 69 to 75 seats. So I don't think we need to have any more MLAs in Alberta right now as far as that's concerned.

I think maybe we do have a certain hang-up about what is urban and what is rural, because somebody representing Grande Prairie, for instance, the people they are representing . . . Grande Prairie is heavily a rural service centre, no doubt about it, and the people they are representing are maybe not all rural people but they're people that are serving rural people, which is a fact you have to take into consideration. I think you're going to have difficulty with – and Fort McMurray looks justifiably that they could become a constituency on their own. But then you're going to have some places like Fort Chipewyan. What are you going to do with them? That's the difficulty. And Mike knows so well what it's like to go into those kinds of areas, because he's been very helpful to some of the others, like Norm Weiss, in helping out in those communities. If you have to go those distances, it's a factor.

MR. SIGURDSON: Maybe I can just throw out something that's hypothetical, which is something we're not allowed to do in the Legislature, as you well know. How would you feel if instead of having to work for, you know, trying to look at 25 percent or 10 percent, we just took the average, the 18,000 or whatever it might be if you were to take the population, and where you could, have a constituency that was that size, that average? And where you've got areas like, say, Chinook, which is sparsely populated and no population centres there at all, as opposed to, say, Fort McMurray, which has the largest pocket of its voting population contained within the city – if you worked toward zero but you could justify the anomaly, how would you feel about that?

MR. APPLEBY: I wouldn't feel very good really. You know, you're looking at what? Eighteen thousand on the average?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah.

MR. APPLEBY: That would eliminate a lot of rural constituencies, wouldn't it?

MR. SIGURDSON: It would probably eliminate some, yeah.

MR. APPLEBY: Quite a few.

MR. SIGURDSON: But that way you would be able to justify. You know, if you're living a half hour from Edmonton and Stony Plain, or in Wetaskiwin, once you're on Highway 2 – Ponoka, Lacombe, those areas; small geographical constituencies that again, you know, you could cross by automobile in a short time and you can access the capital city again in a short time – you might very well be able to increase that but still be able to justify, then, a place that has Chinook, whose farms are spread out with one, I suppose, major centre of Hanna in that area. Then you'd be able to justify that as the anomaly and say, "Well, that demands a certain kind of representation, given the area," whereas if you've got good sources of transportation, you might very well then say, "Right; that doesn't qualify."

MR. APPLEBY: I'm never too happy with the criterion of using a percentage, but I realize that the committee and the commission, when it's constituted, have to have some sort of criteria they can justify their recommendations with, and it's very difficult to come up with something that would be generally acceptable. But I would be very, very reluctant to agree that you should just go on and divide the population by the number of constituencies and say, "This is it."

MR. SIGURDSON: The reason I asked that – if I may, Mr. Chairman – is that this gets back to some of the problems from some perspective, I suppose, of the Charter. What they've done in southern Saskatchewan is taken their number of constituencies, divided it down, and they've got an average, plus or minus 25 percent, except the two most northern constituencies of Athabasca and Cumberland: they have a variance of less than 50 percent. They were able to justify that by having all the other constituencies fall within the 25 percent.

In Manitoba they have a permitted variance of plus or minus 10 percent. It created a constituency in the north. I was going to say the northeast corner, but it's the entire northeast of the province. They've got a constituency that's 1,060 miles by 990 miles in order to create that. Well, you see, that's the problem we have in trying to make the considerations that we have. We

have to operate within certain guidelines that are given us, and it's going to be very difficult . . .

MR. APPLEBY: Oh, I appreciate that. That's why you're here.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes. And that's why - I don't know; sometimes it's easier to justify an anomaly, you know. But if you say that 60 constituencies are an anomaly and 20 constituencies are the average, that's not a justification. You haven't got any anomalies then. But if you've got a couple that are quite distinct by their numbers . . .

MR. APPLEBY: It sounds like great fodder for the media anyway.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's great fodder for a lot of folk.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions? Frank? From the audience?

MR. APPLEBY: I just wanted to say that one other consideration when you speak about Athabasca and Westlock as probably included in one constituency: there's a lot of harmony there as far as it's an agriculture based area. Lac La Biche fits in very well with the Bonnyville area over in that direction because it's oil based, it's forestry based, and so on over there. So those are the types of economic factors to consider that Peter Stasiuk had mentioned as quite important too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank, one of the recommendations that came out very early on in our hearings - in fact, it was while we were in Peace River, I believe - was that once the commission is struck, the commission should hold a few hearings across the province; not the full-scale hearings, but some hearings.

MR. APPLEBY: Information type of things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Information hearings, but also to give people an opportunity to come in and make the very case you're making. When we were over in Barrhead in late February, early March, we had a very good brief presented by Swan Hills on why Swan Hills should remain part of the Barrhead constituency. They were giving the links that people in Barrhead and Swan Hills have. That kind of information flowing to the commission before the commission sits down to do its initial map-making might be quite valuable. The commission then have that information to add to their information base, they do their interim report, make it public, and then go back to the full set of hearings where individuals and organizations and communities have a chance to come in and have input. But to have that initial input first and say, "Please, when looking at boundaries, take into account these factors" - there just may well be some things there that would otherwise go overlooked and cause further problems later on.

MR. APPLEBY: I think that's an important approach to take, because in those preliminary hearings not only do they do the sorts of things you have mentioned but it creates a public awareness that these types of hearings are coming up. Perhaps this one here today people will say, "Oh, I meant to go to that, but I forgot all about it." But if they have something like that in a preliminary way, it'll alert them to the fact that they'd better be on the lookout for the real one that comes up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks. Any other questions of Frank?

MR. MacINTYRE: I'd just like to say one thing about Frank's presentation. I wouldn't like it to be put again that we suggested maybe Westlock would go back to Athabasca. If Redwater-Andrew stayed as it is, we'd be a leg or an appendix again to Athabasca, stuck way out here by ourselves. I'm just suggesting the possibility.

MR. APPLEBY: You're never going to get an ideal one, John.

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

Is there anyone else who would like to make a presentation who's not currently registered? All right. Before we sum up, are there any other questions or comments anyone would like to make from the floor? You're welcome to do that.

Yes, Peter.

MR. STASIUK: I appreciate you people have a job, and I think you people understand the situation we have of western Canada against eastern Canada where the power is. For goodness' sake, let's not create it in the province of Alberta between urban and rural.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Peter. That was Sheena's point. Anyone else? For the last time: anyone else?

MR. APPLEBY: Sold.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, then, we'll go to our own summation. Pat, starting with you, please.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I would like to acknowledge the excellent presentations that have been made. We certainly appreciate the effort that you made to do your own research and the manner in which you presented it. I think you can appreciate that at all the public hearings we hear something just a little different each time, and these are the factors that the commission, I'm sure, will take into account when they write their report.

As you know, I'm not a member of the committee - I'm simply an ex officio member to this committee - but hopefully I will be on the commission that draws the lines. I can tell you that I was a commissioner on the federal redistribution, and at that point we had 26 seats. We put six in Edmonton, six in Calgary, and 14 in the rural, and we were operating within a plus or minus 25 percent factor. I think if you look at the numbers you'll find that most of the rural are on the minus side of the ledger and those in Edmonton and Calgary are on the plus side of the ledger, and this will stand a court challenge. We are quite confident of that.

We thank you for your presentations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pat. Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'd just like to echo Pat's words a little bit. I appreciate everybody coming out today. I think one of the things we need to do in whatever legislation we propose is perhaps eliminate all reference to urban and rural, and then that might eliminate labels. If you eliminate the labels, I think you can solve some of the problems right there.

I appreciate the concerns you're having about representation. I agree that you have to have representation, and that's the only

fair thing to go. I think Frank asked a question that has been asked many times and that is: what really is meant by representation? I think you can talk about that in a long ways because there's representation in the constituency and then there's representation in the Legislature. Those are two different kinds but equally important kinds of representation as well. So it's going to be difficult no matter what we do. I think the first comment that started it off: no matter what we do, we're not going to please all the folks – but we'll do what we can, and we'll do the best we can.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.  
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, again, I want to thank you for coming. This is an important exercise. It's the first time that we've ever undertaken something like this to more or less set the rules by which the following commission will operate. Whether we've been in rural Alberta or in urban Alberta, I think the underlying theme we're getting is that there has to be some degree of fairness, and I suppose that there's where the definition of "fairness" will come into play.

A lot of people in rural Alberta feel that the cities are pretty much homogenous, that we've got the same problems on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Well, the fact of the matter is that we're not like that. I represent a constituency that is industrial in one corner and has farmland in the north. I've got low income, welfare, single moms in one area, and I've got incomes in the north area that are over \$150,000 per household. There's a lot of diversity there, and if you're a member of the Legislature and you haven't got time for whatever reason, whether it's travel or you've got your appointment schedule booked – if you're not looking after your constituents, they would argue that that's not being fair. So we've got a job to do in trying to make sure that there is that degree of fairness, whether it's going to be for our constituents or hopefully it's going to be for all Albertans.

I think a point I'd like to make, Mr. Chairman, is that when I have gone into the Legislature, whether I see an urban member stand up or a rural member stand up, when they make an argument in the Legislature they do it because they believe it's in the best interests of all Alberta, not just for their constituency and not just for their urban or rural centres. So try and keep that in mind as well.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom.  
Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah. Again I'd just like to take a moment to personally thank the presenters. As a rural member I can see the valid points you present that there are already regional disparities in Alberta like the regional disparities we have in Canada, and we want to make sure that we don't get into the same situation in Alberta as we do in Canada. I think that in order for Alberta to remain as strong as it is economically, we will want to make sure rural Alberta is strong, because that's what's going to make Alberta strong. If rural Alberta weakens, we're in trouble because the cities will not survive, will not remain as strong as they are. I don't believe, you know, that rural Albertans are asking for anything unreasonable. From listening through these hearings and the presentations today, I think all that rural Albertans are asking for is an opportunity to be able to provide effective representation for their constituents,

and knowing rural Albertans, living in rural Alberta all my life, I know people are very honest and hardworking and they mean well when they say that. As a rural commission member, I will do my darnedest to make sure that we do have a fair system for all Albertans, keeping your presentations in mind.

With that, I'd like to thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Again, a special thanks to all of you for coming out today. Coming out to an electoral boundary hearing in the middle of August isn't the most exciting thing in the world. I know that had we been able to keep our original schedule of being here in mid-June the attendance would have been better and there would have been more briefs, but it's certainly a credit to those of you who came out today. A special thanks to John, Peter, Sheena, and Frank who gave briefs on your behalf.

Just highlighting some of the key points made in those briefs. John started by reminding us that really the plus/minus 25 percent is not enough, that there should be more flexibility in the formula than that to take into account other factors. Peter built on that point by saying that in addition to population you should be looking at the social, economic, and geographic factors within a particular area. He also suggested that the current balance between urban and rural should be maintained. Sheena went on to again emphasize the current split, that that split be maintained, and eloquently reminded us that Alberta has been in the forefront in fighting for a Triple E Senate – fairness and equity – and how could we possibly be contemplating doing something right in our own backyard that would fly in the face of that.

When Frank spoke, he added to the points that Peter had made on the social, economic, and geographic factors by adding transportation and communications. He mentioned distance from the capital as a factor, and that was something that came out in Rycroft a number of times. The MLA for the Dunvegan constituency reminded us that he spends over six hours to travel from his home to Edmonton: that's a one-way trip. Then Frank made a pitch through Pat Ledgerwood to the commission on what the map might look at in northeast Alberta, in this area in particular; couldn't resist getting into that part of it, which is good.

We appreciate the input we've received today. We'll be adding to the information base we have from the 30 meetings we've already held. We'll be adding the eight meetings yet to come to that as well, so that when we sit down, we'll be trying to look at all those factors.

You know, Frank put his finger on something in his summation that reminded me of an earlier brief. Someone, and I think it may have been when we were out in Hanna, said: "Look, we've got to stop talking about urban and rural. Let's find some other terms to use, so that we're not dividing ourselves along those lines. Let's find something that will more adequately reflect what we're really trying to say." And of course that is the challenge our committee has: to try to come up with something that's fair and that's right. That's our objective; that's what we're striving for, and it's no easy task, because there are a lot of critics out there and there are expectations. There are expectations in some areas that more seats will flow, and that means seats at the expense of somebody else.

Another common theme we've heard across the province is: don't add more seats; don't solve the problem by creating more seats; you don't have that luxury. That's been a fairly strong point made throughout the hearings. So we know the job and the task we have in front of us; we know it's not easy. But I

mean this very sincerely: receiving input from Albertans has been of significant benefit. Pat said it best when he indicated that at each and every hearing we've heard a slightly different twist. Now, I don't think there were any huge, new ideas presented today that we haven't heard before, but we heard some variations on earlier ideas that we hadn't heard before, and that's what's important: to come out with some examples that can be used or some concepts that might not have been

considered in a particular way, and to see if you can build on those concepts.

So thank you all so very much for coming out. We've got a few minutes before we have to leave for St. Albert. There's coffee and juice at the back, and we'd be happy to speak with you on an individual basis if you'd like.

[The committee adjourned at 3:33 p.m.]