

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[12:05 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm pleased to declare the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries meeting being held here in Mayerthorpe officially open, and with that a welcome to those of you who have come out today. I'm going to introduce the committee members in a moment. We're then going to ask Mr. Pat Ledgerwood, the Chief Electoral Officer of the province, to give a brief overview as to the reasons why we're here, which stem from a court case in British Columbia. Frank Bruseker will then lead us through a slide presentation to give you some historical and population data that we've gathered, and we'll then proceed with the briefs.

We have microphones, and the microphones are here so that we can record the proceedings. That's required by our own standing rules in the Legislature. There's a written record, which is available to the public, of this meeting and all the meetings. We don't want the microphones in any way to inhibit the free flow of information back and forth, so we try to keep our meetings as informal as possible. The process we follow is to invite a presenter forward, a brief is given, members of the committee are given an opportunity to ask questions or make comment, and then we throw it open to those of you who are here to add to the comments or take issue with them as you see fit. I understand we do have a couple of written briefs by presenters who are unable to be here, so we will read those into the record as well. That's basically the process we like to follow.

We're here to learn. We're here to share information with you, but we're here to learn from you, to get your ideas on how you believe we should address this very sensitive and important issue of electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta.

At this time I'm going to introduce the panel members who are with us. Starting on my far right, Mr. Pat Ledgerwood, Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta. We're very pleased that Pat's been able to join us with the expertise he has not only in terms of Alberta elections and our redistribution but also in that he served on the most recent federal redistribution commission.

Next to me, on my immediate right, Frank Bruseker. Frank is a member of the Assembly for Calgary-North West. He's a first-time member, a Liberal member of the House, and has been getting a good education on rural Alberta. It's a refresher for others of us.

On my immediate left, Pat Black. Pat is a Conservative member of the Assembly and represents the constituency of Calgary-Foothills. This is her first term in the Assembly. As a chartered accountant, or with that kind of background, she likes numbers, so if any of you have questions or ideas on a formula we could use, I'm sure you'll see Pat take quite an interest in it and get into that discussion.

Tom Sigurdson is with us. Tom represents the constituency of Edmonton-Belmont. He's a New Democratic member of the Assembly. This is his second term in the Assembly. He served as executive assistant to the late Grant Notley, so he does have some experience with rural Alberta. In addition, Mr. Notley served on a previous Electoral Boundaries Commission, and Tom was involved to some extent in the capacity of assistant to the member, so he has also been quite involved in this process.

The Hon. Peter Trynchy, the host MLA, we're pleased to have you join us. It's been our practice in other communities to ask the host MLA to join the panel. At the end there may be some remarks you wish to make, Peter, and we'll welcome them at that time.

As you're aware, we are now in the wind-down stage of the hearing process. We held 29 hearings prior to the commencement of the House in early March of this year. We had hoped to hold 10 additional hearings in communities where requests had been made. In the case of the Whitecourt constituency, through the strong urging of your member of the Assembly and by presentations made by citizens and residents of the constituency, the Whitecourt constituency was identified as one of the 10 areas in the province where we should come back for a hearing.

We originally had hoped to hold these hearings in June. When the Legislature went over the time we thought it would adjourn - in fact, we went into early July - we were forced to postpone the meetings. That's the reason we're out here now in the latter half of August. Of course, the attendance has been lower in all the communities. We were in Rycroft on Tuesday. Yesterday we were in Westlock and in St. Albert. But even though the attendance has been down and the number of briefs presented have been fewer, the quality of the briefs remains just as good, equal to or better than briefs we received earlier. In fact, last evening in St. Albert we had two briefs presented which were in essence supplements to briefs presented earlier, where, based on additional information from other hearings, they added to their original points and provided further information for us.

If you do wish to present a brief, you don't have to read it. If it's a lengthy, detailed brief, we will ensure it goes into our *Hansard* record. As well, we are keeping a good record of all the briefs. We can pull out the most important recommendation made in each brief and the secondary recommendation, so we have the ability to determine how many of the briefs have emphasized balancing various factors when determining a formula. As well, if an individual wishes to submit a written brief, we would ask that that be done by the end of this month, because we will begin our deliberations as a committee in early September when we try to write a report. Once the report is completed, we have the ability to make it public. The Legislature will come back this fall, will debate the recommendations presented. Presumably legislation will be developed and presented to the Assembly, and it's our expectation that a commission will be struck before the end of the calendar year so that the commission may go out and do its work in terms of drawing the lines between constituencies. If any of you have thoughts on where lines should be, that's not a task we as a committee are able to look at, but we will ensure through Mr. Ledgerwood, who will serve on the commission, that those recommendations are given consideration.

I'm now going to turn to Pat Ledgerwood and ask him to give us background on the B.C. court case, and Frank Bruseker will follow with the slide presentation.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, we would normally have completed the commission work in Alberta in that there is a requirement under legislation for a commission to be struck after every second general election. Current boundaries were used at the 1986 general election and at the 1989 general election, so the requirement was that a commission be established at the first session following the 1989 general election. But because of the B.C. situation, which I'll describe, and also as the chairman has explained, this committee was formed.

In British Columbia they had a variance. Their smallest electoral division was just over 5,500 population and their largest just over 68,000. They formed a commission, headed by Justice Fisher, who looked at their situation. The commission was

appointed in April of '87, and they reported in December of '89. Basically, three recommendations: that they eliminate the dual-member ridings in British Columbia, that they increase the number of MLAs from 69 to 75 – those two decisions don't really impact on us, but what they also said was equal weight for each elector. The justice checked with the Charter, checked with other jurisdictions, and determined that there should be one average established, the total population of British Columbia divided by 75, and all electoral divisions be within plus or minus 25 percent of that average. He tabled his report. A Professor Dixon and associates decided that the government wasn't acting quickly enough, and they brought it to court. The case was heard before the Chief Justice of the B.C. Supreme Court, Chief Justice Madam McLachlin, and she basically agreed with the commission report that the average plus or minus 25 percent was reasonable. There was no appeal to that decision.

Professor Dixon and his associates still weren't happy – the government hadn't done anything – so they brought it to court again and the case was heard by a Justice Meredith. Basically, he said that although the boundaries may not be constitutional, there was no way the court was going to dissolve the Legislature and take over the responsibilities of elected representatives; the court was not a government and they were not there to legislate. However, the government did form a commission in 1989, and basically that commission adopted the Fisher report with minor variations. Those boundaries are now effective in British Columbia. They became effective in January of this year, so the next general election in British Columbia will be fought on the 75 electoral divisions where the population is within plus or minus 25 percent of the average.

Mr. Chairman, that's basically the background.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much. Any questions of Pat on his report?

Okay, Frank, would you like to briefly lead us through the slides?

MR. BRUSEKER: Sure. The slides in essence are the same as the package which you may have picked up at the door. The first transparency here is simply a list of the 83 constituencies in the province in alphabetical order. The second one is the same list but now in numerical order, showing the largest constituency, based upon eligible voters, being that of Edmonton-Whitemud, 31 and a half thousand people, and Cardston being the smallest with 8,105 registered voters. Cardston also has an additional 800 Blood Indians that chose not to be enumerated in the last enumeration.

If you were to add all those figures together, you'd get a total of about one and a half million electors in the province, and if you divide that by the 83 constituencies we currently have in the province, you would get an average figure of 18,685 electors per constituency. If we then used the plus or minus 25 percent variation Pat Ledgerwood talked about that is being applied in British Columbia, you'd get an upper maximum allowable of 23,356 and a lower end being 14,014. If we then look at the list of constituencies, the ones that are highlighted in green would exceed that 23,000, and the ones that are highlighted in pink are below the 14,000. As shown on the map of Alberta, all the pink-coloured constituencies are below the 14,000, and you can see that Whitecourt is, in fact, one of those constituencies that is more than 25 percent below the acceptable.

This is the city of Calgary. You'll notice some constituencies highlighted in green. They are more than 23,000 electors. The next one is the city of Edmonton. Again the same thing: a

number of constituencies highlighted in green, indicating they are over the acceptable guidelines. The city of Lethbridge is currently divided into Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West, two constituencies which fall within the acceptable range if we use that 25 percent variation. This is the city of Medicine Hat. The lines you see there are different polls. This is one constituency, and it currently exceeds the 25 percent guideline.

Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South at the last redistribution were divided. Red Deer was one constituency. At the last redistribution it was deemed to be too large to be one constituency, and it was decided to change it to two. The brown line which you see represents the city of Red Deer city limits. The black line around the outside is the current political division showing Red Deer-North constituency and Red Deer-South. It was decided that in order to get sufficient population to justify two constituencies, some of the rural area around would be included.

This is the city of St. Albert, located just to the northwest of the city of Edmonton. It is one constituency at the moment and exceeds the 25 percent guideline.

When we looked at the province as a whole, we noticed that some of the constituencies were in fact quite small. The purple colouration here indicates those constituencies that are more than 35 percent away from the average of 18,000, meaning, in terms of numbers, 12,000 electors or less. You'll notice in this case Whitecourt is not quite that small. We noticed there were a half dozen, actually five, that were very small. They are more than 50 percent away from the average of 18,000, meaning they have 10,000 electors or less per constituency.

This is simply a list of the hearings. You can see we are in Mayerthorpe today, of course. We've got another six hearings to go. It'll take us to next Friday, and that will bring us to a total of 39 hearings. This is simply a visual representation of where those places are around the province.

This last transparency in this particular set: first of all, the green dots show where it is that we have been, and the purple once again show those constituencies that are more than 35 percent below the provincial average. What we have tried to do as much as possible is go into those constituencies which are most likely to see change in their boundaries because the population just doesn't seem to be there at the moment.

If you look at the bottom half of this, one of the questions that was asked early on in the hearings process was: what about using total population as opposed to the eligible voters list? So the information we're going to go through right now is not included in the package you have picked up at the door but in fact is set up in the same kind of fashion.

Based on the last census data we have available, which is 1986, Alberta had just under 2.4 million residents. If you divide that by the 83 electoral divisions, we get an average figure of 28,500. If we then apply that plus or minus 25 percent variation to the 28,000, we get an upper end, then, of 35,000, a lower end of about 21,000. Again, highlighting it on this transparency, you can see that the green ones are over the 25 percent, the pink ones are more than 25 percent below. The interesting thing here is that we have one less green and two less pink-coloured ones than we did on the first transparency you saw like this, meaning that there are fewer constituencies that could be impacted by great change.

This map is very interesting. The last map we put up that had some pink-coloured constituencies like this showed that . . . The pink again indicates those constituencies that are more than 25 percent below the average, but this time we have two constituencies coloured in green that are currently classed as

rural constituencies that exceed the upper end of 35,000 population, and those are the constituencies of Grande Prairie on the western side and Fort McMurray on the northeast corner.

This is the city of Calgary. The city of Calgary again has some green-coloured constituencies. This one has seven coloured in green; the last one we used, the eligible voters list, had nine coloured in green. This is the city of Edmonton: again, some coloured in green. On this particular map we have again with population seven constituencies coloured in green. With the one before, where we used the enumeration list, we had eight. The interesting thing to note about both Edmonton and Calgary, regardless of which statistic you use, is that the constituencies that are growing on the border are the ones that are exceeding the guidelines of 25 percent.

Using a 35 percent variation looking at the very small constituencies, you can see there are some here coloured in purple. The interesting thing to note here: this particular map has 12 constituencies that are more than 35 percent away; when we used the enumeration list, there were 16 constituencies. This one is quite dramatic. We have only one constituency using total population that exceeds the guidelines by being more than 50 percent below the average, and that is the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest in the southwest corner of the province.

We have traveled to a couple of other jurisdictions, the other three western provinces, to find out what's happening in those areas, because we want to be in the same kind of ballpark as they are. So we have traveled to those three provinces. This is a list of the hearings we've held up until August 12, and Tuesday of this week we restarted our hearings process. You can see we are now, I'm sure, at over 700 people attending in total. The total number of presentations we've had is probably now over 300, with 115 written submissions to that time, and we've had more since then. So we've had quite a lot of input from a variety of locations around the province.

That's the last slide. Are there any questions? We're now clear?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much.

When making the introductions, I was remiss in not introducing Bob Pritchard. Bob is the senior administrator for our committee, and any contact you've had with the office in all likelihood would have been through Bob. And Ted Edwards is Bob's backup. He was the person who registered you at the door.

Paula Welch is with us from *Hansard*, along with Doug Jeneroux. Of course, as I indicated earlier, there will be a written transcript of this hearing and all the others available.

Bob, let's go ahead with the presentation we have.

MR. PRITCHARD: Okay. Gordon Easton, could you come up, please?

MR. EASTON: Good afternoon and welcome to our lovely little town.

Committee members, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Gord Easton. I'm a businessman in town and councillor for the town of Mayerthorpe making this brief on behalf of the town.

Dealing with electoral boundaries will shape our future for many years to come, and you people don't have an easy job and an easy task ahead of you. I'm speaking not only from the town's aspect but on behalf of rural Alberta as a whole.

Rural Alberta sometimes gets forgotten when we're dealing with the big urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton, because

there are differences when we're dealing with how you can represent a population in an urban centre and in a rural centre. For instance, when I make my references, I'll be making them as of the stats for the Whitecourt constituency. When we're dealing with the Whitecourt constituency, our MLA has to deal with over 20 different governments, being municipalities, counties, improvement districts, hospital boards, school boards, whereas if you're dealing with an urban MLA, you're generally dealing with one set. A rural MLA has a vast diversity of geographics and interests to deal with. In the Whitecourt constituency our MLA has to deal with a growing urban centre, being Whitecourt, and small towns like Mayerthorpe. He has to deal with counties, IDs. He has to deal with the logging industry, the oil and gas industry, the farming industry. It takes a lot of time to deal with those differences. Our MLA also has to travel several hundred kilometres. The constituency from one point to the other at the farthest distance is about 150 miles and ranges approximately 80 miles wide. So to really represent the constituency properly, he has to put a lot of time and a lot of miles on just to get to one centre or the other, whereas city MLAs have the benefit of having just one central office because they have a small area to look after.

We realize that representation by population is a fair system, but we can't recommend a large increase in the number of urban MLAs to the Legislature. What our town council has decided and what we have put forward in a recommendation is that we go by the 60-40 principle, that 60 percent of the members be from the urban centres and 40 percent represent rural Alberta. This will stop the large number of people representing the urban centres, which ideally is going by the one man/one vote system, and will still give adequate MLAs to represent rural Alberta. Basically, what we don't want to see in rural Alberta is the situation happening in Canada as a whole where Quebec and a little bit of Ontario are controlling the country. We don't want it to happen that Calgary and Edmonton control the province.

We wish you good luck in resolving this issue, as we don't believe there is any easy solution that will please everyone. Thank you for providing the town an opportunity to make this presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Gordon.

Questions from the panel? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you very much for your presentation, Gordon. You've more or less answered the one question I was going to have, which was with respect to the ratio of urban members to rural members. As you know, it is currently approximately 50-50, and you recommended 60-40. That's somewhat reflective of population as it tends to settle in our province, 60 percent being in the larger urban centres and 40 percent being in the rural communities. For the benefit of future commissions, were there to be continued rural depopulation, increased urbanization of our province, if we were to have 75 percent residing in urban Alberta, would you propose that a model continue along those lines?

MR. EASTON: No. When debating this, our town really considered this, and really would like no more than the 60-40 because of the uniqueness to rural Alberta where it takes our representative hours to go from one end to the other and properly look after all parts of the constituency. A city MLA can do it in a matter of a very few minutes. When you're looking at properly representing a rural population, that has to

be taken into serious consideration, because we don't want rural Alberta not properly represented because of population.

MR. SIGURDSON: If I might just follow up, Mr. Chairman. You claim travel as a major factor, and it's one that certainly I share. But if a constituent has to wait 20 minutes or even an hour for their member of the Legislature to travel from one rural centre to another rural centre in order to meet face to face with their constituent, would you see any difference of that constituent having to wait for that hour of travel? In an urban constituency that might have twice the population, would there be any difference, say, of that constituent having to wait an hour in an office of an urban member because another constituent is ahead of them?

MR. EASTON: It's not as much time waiting in an office as of all these meetings that an MLA has to attend in the course of a year. An MLA doesn't have much time. He has not only his job, his portfolios to look after and anything else with his day-to-day operations but also as part of his responsibilities he has to go out and meet the different people and meet them in different parts of the communities: make presentations at one part of the constituency and then tear 100 miles across country to another one to do another presentation or another committee meeting or whatever. A city MLA is only dealing with one government, so he can deal with everything in one central location, whereas a rural MLA like our MLA has to deal with over 20 different municipalities, the whole bit. If he wants to talk with one of them or go out to relay the government's position on something to any of them, it can mean a lot of time consumed in the area of transportation.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Anyone from the audience? Okay, Gordon. Thank you very much.

MR. EASTON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob, our next presenter.

MR. PRITCHARD: Our next presenter is Terry Nelson.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you come up, Terry?

MR. NELSON: Mr. Chairman and members of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, we are pleased to have this opportunity to appear before you for the purpose of presenting the county of Lac Ste. Anne's position paper, information, and recommendation on issues affecting electoral boundary legislation and representation in the Legislative Assembly for rural Alberta.

Although we offer no new or special solution to the select special committee in the development of rules to govern the setting of electoral boundaries, we do believe the rural members of the Legislative Assembly encounter some unique problems in communicating with their constituents that are not encountered by urban members. For this reason we wish to add our voice to those of other rural Albertans.

Rural constituencies cover large geographic areas necessitating travel over vast distances for both constituents and elected members to access and communicate with one another. The rural MLAs represent numerous school boards, hospital boards, health units, planning commissions, advisory boards, and local

municipalities, as well as a much larger number of community groups. A count of these organizations within the county of Lac Ste. Anne totals 197. The requests and representation of the aforementioned groups require an extensive amount of time and effort. The various municipalities and communities within the rural constituency have diversified interests. The population is not evenly distributed, and many municipalities are in direct competition with one another for economic development opportunities, funding, grants, and government programs. All of this tends to place the elected member in a position of disagreement with large segments of the constituents.

For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, we recommend that rural Alberta constituency boundaries cannot be increased in size. We trust your final deliberations and recommendations will reflect these concerns and be fair to all residents. We wish you well in your deliberations. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir.

Questions? Yes, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Nelson, in your discussions with your groups did you get the feeling that the people were looking for two distinct sets of criteria for determining distribution within the province, one for an urban setting and one for a rural? Like determining a mean for the rural and a mean for the urban?

MR. NELSON: It's a hard thing to analyze. I appreciate the task you have, and I don't envy you it. I think they want consideration given to some of the points we've put forward: the travel, the large number of groups. In our case with Mr. Trynchy he may be required to speak to . . . Well, as an example, I'll use the Beaverlodge community group. It represents maybe 20 or 30 of his constituents, but they believe they have as much right to access him as someone at Fox Creek with the same number of people. And how can you be in all these places at one time? It's a question of two sets of criteria. I wouldn't say yes, that there should be two sets of criteria. I think they want something that's fair and equitable yet recognizing the limitations the rural MLAs operate under.

MRS. BLACK: So you definitely feel that these other things besides population – the other factors such as distance, geography, et cetera – have to be factored into the distribution network, whether it's urban or rural?

MR. NELSON: Definitely so. And as we point out here, in an urban constituency – it's within usually a large city or so forth – you're dealing with one city council, one hospital board usually. I believe that within the county we have one hospital board; we have the county itself as a municipality, the towns of Mayerthorpe, Sangudo, Onoway, and numerous hamlets. They all want some kind of economic development, some kind of special grants for projects, whether it be recreation, tourism, economic development. They all demand time of the MLA, because I know we as a county do the same. If we wish to pursue something, we like to contact our MLA and speak directly to him, emphasize what we want to do and our expectations. And there are all these others. As we say, there are 197 other groups just within the county boundaries that have the same expectation. I'm sorry, I didn't bring a map to . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: There's a constituency map there.

MR. NELSON: Oh, okay.

MR. TRYNCHY: It's about 150 miles long and 80 miles wide.

MR. NELSON: But to show you what portion the county is in . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: About like that?

MR. NELSON: Oh, smaller than that.

MR. TRYNCHY: Yeah, just a small . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I may . . . Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

MR. NELSON: Your westerly boundaries are here. Then we go south to about here, and come up in this area. So, you know, it's just a small portion of this constituency, and that's what's contained within that.

MR. TRYNCHY: That would be about - what? - 3,000 or less in population, eh? It's just a small . . .

MR. NELSON: In your area.

MR. TRYNCHY: In my area.

MR. NELSON: In your area approximately 3,500. Our total population in the county is 7,400.

MR. TRYNCHY: About 3,500 are in my . . .

MR. NELSON: Well, I'm just talking county. I'm not referring to the town of Mayerthorpe or Sangudo or that.

MRS. BLACK: According to what we have, you have 16,683 square kilometres in the riding of Whitecourt.

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, I've never added them up.

MRS. BLACK: Statistics are wonderful. And that compares with 33 square kilometres in St. Albert. You have 16,000, so . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: What's the city riding in kilometres?

MRS. BLACK: We don't know. I think it's 705 for Calgary in total. So that's eighteen. We don't have it broken down by riding, just in total. And Edmonton is 700. So take those and divide by 17 and 18 respectively and you've got it. There is a difference.

MR. NELSON: If I may add something. I think the expectation, and I don't know why it's there - and I'm speaking just on behalf of the county of Lac Ste. Anne now - is that when council wish to have a meeting with Mr. Trynchy, usually they like it to be at council chambers. It seems like you're more comfortable on your own turf; your information is readily available if there are any questions. So that again demands more time. At times we do travel to the city to meet with government people, and if the MLA is available, he certainly attends. I think that expectation is there from other towns - you know, I'm speaking very liberally for them now - but I think that expectation is from other councils and groups too. They would rather meet him face to face, like, you say, on their own turf, which is a fair demand. I know that when we as a councillor or

reeve get the same request, they don't want to come to the county office. They'd rather meet in the hall that's close by or in their own home, because they feel more comfortable doing it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions? Anyone from the audience? Thanks very much, Terry.

MR. NELSON: Thank you for the opportunity.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thanks, Terry.
Hello, Michael. Welcome to my city.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's nice to see you.

MR. CARDINAL: I've been driving all day to get here.

MR. TRYNCHY: It's a rural constituency, Michael, eh?

MR. CARDINAL: That's normal in rural Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to introduce Mike Cardinal, the MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, who's just joined us. Mike is a Conservative member of the Assembly, and he is a first-time member. He's working hard, and as he mentioned, he's been on the road. The unofficial theme song for our committee is *On the Road Again*, because we seem to spend a lot of time on the road. Welcome, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other oral briefs to be presented? Yes, sir.

MR. KRAUSE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just quick and fast.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could you introduce yourself, please, for the record?

MR. KRAUSE: I'm old man Krause.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Krause.

MR. KRAUSE: I came here in 1911. All right. Good enough. You have done good work, but you haven't touched the matter at hand at all, and that's the little tiny administrations that we are whacked up in: 20,000 pieces. A man from Blue Ridge has to go 40 miles to Barrhead to renew his trapline, but there's a game office in Whitecourt. Now, why all this? We can take this as many administrations as we can think of, as many as there are, but we're all whacked up in pieces. If I want to see about a road - if it's there, I've got to go over here; if it's just across that line, I've got to go to Edson. Why? You see, it's all these sorts of things. That's what the people are unhappy about, not their constituency at all. It's not that. And to fiddle and fool with all this stuff on whether this one is 5 percent more than that one doesn't matter. It doesn't really. Get right down to basics.

Then there's one more thing. Why cannot we the citizens of Canada have the right to put our own ballot in the box instead of having it taken away from us as though we were some kind of criminal? In 1939 they gave me an old, rusty Lee Enfield rifle and said, "Clean it up"; I got all the live ammunition I could

carry. Now they don't trust me with a little piece of paper, and it's offensive.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. KRAUSE: Can you change that? [interjection] Well, make a whack at it, eh?

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

Mr. KRAUSE: Now, we have these other things. I know the name very well. Trap lines: that legal description out there in no-man's-land doesn't mean a thing to the people out there, but Joe Blow creek or this lake means something. Then with the string over a little somebody goes in there: oh, oh, oh, you're trespassing and all this. That's the thing I'm getting at. Those little things; they're the ones that count.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, good for you. That's one of the reasons we're here: to hear the concerns you have.

The first point you raised really, I believe, comes down to the question of what we call coterminous boundaries. We've got our municipal boundaries, which do not necessarily conform with hospital district boundaries; they certainly don't conform with provincial or federal electoral boundaries. If I'm reading you correctly, sir, you're saying: "Why can't I do all the things I want to do in one centre? I have to get a fishing licence one place; I've got to do something else someplace else." Is that correct?

MR. KRAUSE: Yes. Perhaps what made me a little more violent – if you'll accept that word – on this is that in Europe they have another system, which I like. The mayor of the town has X councillors. They take in the town business and are for what's governed around it; they're set by rivers or whatever and so on. No matter what you do, you go to the town office. If I want to build a pigpen in the middle of main street, no, I can't do it; okay. But I can go back to the town office and get a copy of what every last person said or did: who voted this way, who voted that way. They're not going to give me permission to build that pigpen, but I can see who went which way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Are there any panel members who would like to address the question of the ballot and why the ballot is not deposited in the box by the person who is voting but rather must be handed to a deputy returning officer or assistant in the system?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Sir, I don't know whether you noticed that when you got your ballot, as well as having the ballot itself, when the deputy returning officer gave it to you, he tore it off and there was a counterfoil on that particular ballot. Had you turned that over, you would have found that the deputy returning officer's initials were on that ballot, also a number from the poll book. So had you put that ballot back in the box, we would have been able to ascertain from that counterfoil how you voted, in that we would have had your number and we could have checked that in the poll book. So the reason you pass that ballot back to your deputy returning officer is primarily to make sure that that was the ballot we issued you, that it's a proper ballot, to record whether you voted or not, and also to remove the counterfoil. You may remember that the deputy returning officer took that counterfoil off and said to the poll clerk, "Voter so and so has voted," so that was recorded in the poll book.

You may have noticed that they actually ripped up that counterfoil and put it in the garbage so that there was no way they could trace that counterfoil to that ballot. That is part of the rationale on why you pass the ballot back to the election official.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat Black.

MRS. BLACK: I support your argument on that, because that bugs me too. I'm going to ask you a question. At that point – this is off the topic, but you've got me going, because I agree with you – when the foil comes off, why can they not hand me back my ballot? If they want to take your administration, tear your little foil off, fine; go ahead and do that, and I'll put my own ballot in the box. I want to do my own ballot. I think that's a really good point.

MR. KRAUSE: If I can follow the lady, Canada is the only country in the world where they do that. Wait a minute now. Don't get so "Uh, uh, uh." Don't get that way. I didn't start prancing my way from north Africa to Berlin just for – I thought it was freedom. Apparently, it's not. But anyway, who put Gorbachev's ballot in the box in the middle of a big room? His granddaughter. Who put Bush's ballot in the box? Mr. Bush. Why can't I?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in fairness to you, Pat, we as legislators decide. We may receive recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer and others, but the final decision as to what goes in the legislation rests with those of us sitting at the table.

MRS. BLACK: Well, let's fix that up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's your task.

MRS. BLACK: Just fix it up.

MR. SIGURDSON: Maybe what I could do is just tell you a quick story that came out of British Columbia, and it may relate to one of the reasons why you have district returning officers collect the ballots and put them in physically, in front, so that you can witness, at least, the ballot going in. In British Columbia a number of years ago there was a case where a campaign worker went out and took their own ballot and didn't put it in the box. They took the ballot outside of the polling station. They marked that ballot. They then paid somebody a certain amount of money to go out and in another polling station drop that ballot in and go and collect another ballot. You had, throughout the course of a day, in some constituencies that were rather tight – 20, 30 votes made a difference, and for a marginal fee you could rig a campaign. So as long as a person is tearing it off and seeing that the initials are gone and that belongs in that ballot box and it's physically dropped in, you eliminate that problem.

MR. KRAUSE: How do you explain, sir, that Canada is the only country? I've watched all over. I watched black people up the Amazon. One puts in a crooked stick and one a straight stick, and all this in public. I'm not afraid. I have also . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: I think the media tends to allow . . . I can recall during election campaigns in the local area – Bob, you may have dropped your own ballot in your box in order to get that media picture. I know that in our constituency they did

that, and they did that in Edmonton-East with Ross Harvey. So they may allow politicians a little more latitude; I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we leave the issue this way? While it's outside of the specific mandate of the committee, let us review how other provinces in Canada are doing it. You certainly have one champion on your side right now, and we will get back to you. We have your address so we know how to get back to you, so we will respond back.

MR. KRAUSE: It won't cost me anything, will it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. The 39 cent stamp will be our cost.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Krause.

MR. KRAUSE: Fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are there any other oral briefs to be presented? Then, Bob, would you read in the two written briefs from individuals who wanted to be here but were unable to? We'll pause after the first one to see if there are any questions or comments before proceeding to the second.

MR. PRITCHARD: All right. The first written submission is from Mayor Raymond Friend, village of Sangudo, to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries.

The Village Council wishes to express their sincere apologies for not being able to attend today's Public Hearing of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries.

Council hopes that this letter will suffice as their view on the above quoted matter. If this proposal is passed, we feel that serious repercussions will be felt in the rural areas.

A city MLA has to react to only one council. Whereas, within your proposed outline a rural MLA, to make up the population difference, would be dealing with 6 or 7 perhaps more Councils. This change would result in people not receiving the service they require and are entitled to.

Therefore, the Sangudo Village Council does not support the setting of boundaries according to population.

Signed: Mayor Raymond Friend.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Questions or comments from panel members. Do you have any questions or comments? From anyone in the audience? Okay. Thank you.

Bob, let's proceed with the second, please.

MR. PRITCHARD: The second presentation is from the town of Fox Creek to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries.

The Town of Fox Creek is very concerned with the suggestion that Electoral Boundaries should be realigned to better reflect the population bases in the province. We can appreciate the concerns expressed by the metropolitan areas over the apparent lack of representation; however, in our opinion, representation by population only would create a system that is more unfair than the present system.

Land mass and the difficulty with dealing with a sparse population is the opposite problem from the one argued for representation by population. In our opinion though, it is less of a problem. In fact, we believe that in some ways the nature of the current situation provides some balance to what could be a very inequitable situation.

Rural areas of the province are large and sparse. It is difficult for the elected representatives to reach their constituents

and to discuss issues with them because of the vast areas of each of these constituencies.

Rural areas of the province provide most of the natural wealth of the province. We are a province that relies heavily on natural resources. The vast majority of these resources are located in the rural areas of the province. In our opinion, control over these resources (which are a provincial responsibility) should not be totally controlled by the metropolitan areas. In rural Alberta we have enough trouble surviving and ensuring that both the people and the land are fairly represented without the balance of power in the Provincial Legislature being weighted in favour of the metropolitan areas.

We know the problems experienced in the rural areas. We do not need to be controlled by our urban counterparts and dictated to over various issues without all of the factors being weighed.

Please help to ensure that rural Alberta is fairly represented in the Provincial Legislature. Keep the balance of political seats similar to what it is now.

Signed: Town of Fox Creek.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Questions or comments by panel members? Anyone in the audience? Okay. Are there any closing comments anyone would like to make with us today before the committee members wrap up?

I'll then turn it over to you as our host MLA. Are there any comments you'd like to make, Peter?

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to all the members of this - what kind of a group can I call it? - road group. Thanks for coming out to Mayerthorpe. I want to thank Terry and Gord for their presentations today. The briefs presented explained a lot of the consensus that I have.

I guess in the 20 years that I've represented this constituency, I've always felt that an MLA must be accessible to everybody, and that takes some time. You've noticed - the map is there - the distance we have to travel. I believe, too, that every voter wants equal time with their MLA or with their elected person. So how do you provide equal time to each voter in a rural setting as compared to an urban centre where you are closer to your people and you can schedule your meetings in your office, where we have to, in our case, move to other locations? I'll just give you an example of what some of the agenda is. Today I'm here, at 2 o'clock I have to be in Evansburg, at 4 o'clock I have to be in Wildwood, and at 7 o'clock I have to be back here for another meeting. I've seen myself on a number of occasions go to a function at 6 p.m., a 50th wedding anniversary, go to another one at 9 p.m. at another community - say, one at Mayerthorpe, one at Evansburg - then back to Sangudo at midnight for the third function. And they expect you to be there. People don't realize that you're one MLA. If you don't come to their function, they wonder why. They don't realize you have someplace else to go. So you try to make this route, you try to make yourself accessible, and I have done that. It's important that you do that.

I think there's a vast difference representing a rural riding as compared to an urban riding where you can walk around the short distance and contact your people. As Terry mentioned, there are 179 groups in Lac Ste. Anne; that's just a small part of my constituency. There are recreation boards in Peers, where I have to go on Monday, and Nojack and MacKay and Niton Junction. They all expect their elected person, whoever that is, to spend some time with them. If you don't, you remove

yourself very quickly from your people, and that shouldn't happen.

So if we accept the premise that every voter should have equal time with their elected member, how do we deal with it? That's, I guess, your job. Do you make it harder for a rural MLA to represent their people than it presently is now? Whitecourt's in a pretty fortunate position. We're only a couple of [inaudible] short, and if the boundaries remain the same, I'm sure we'd be over that figure at the next census. So it's not that I'm speaking for Whitecourt constituency, because it shouldn't change dramatically, but it's the other constituencies that, you know, you might have bunched up and make the travel a lot more difficult for rural members.

In closing, I want to thank you all for coming. I know you'll put your good sense to work in your recommendations. You've had a lot of good briefs, and I'm sure you'll take the contents of the briefs today and the comments of a number of people you've heard to the test and present us with a resolution this fall that we can accept. Thank you again for coming. It's a difficult chore. It's difficult to be a rural MLA with a large constituency as compared to an urban centre where everything's closer together, but we accept that job and make no complaints. I'll continue doing it.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir, for your comments. Questions or comments by panel members? Yes, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Peter, I was just going to ask you if you've thought of the reverse, going on the road show and going on the tour to have the hearings. One thing I've noticed, particularly in rural Alberta, is that the MLA seems to know everybody in town. When you're in an urban riding such as Frank's and mine that are 40,000 people, you maybe know 10 percent – that would be stretching it – that you could call out, "Hi, Fred," "Hi, Ralph; how are you doing?" in a setting like that. So when you're representing people in a large urban centre like I'm in, which for eight months of the year has an additional 20,000 kids at U of C, so I have over 60,000 that deserve time with me, it's hard to compare it with a rural riding where you have 14,000 or 15,000 or 20,000, where you can go down every street and know everyone in town and their kids. So, again – my question's to Terry – in that we're different, how do you compare the two? I don't know how you tie it together. I think you have a distinct advantage, quite frankly, because you can phone Harry, who owns Home Hardware down here, and ask him something. We can't do that.

MR. TRYNCHY: Pat, it's difficult, but I would say this, that I have 15,000 voters and an urban centre would have 15,000 voters. A rural MLA would know his 15,000 voters, or more of them than an urban one, because of the system.

MRS. BLACK: Well, ours is continually changing.

MR. TRYNCHY: Yeah, because of the system. Sure. We're closer to our people, and it's just something that you expect. In 1971 I shook hands with over 90 percent of my residents because I made it a point to. You know, we're involved and we're more stable. I guess we don't move around. Like, your town of Whitecourt probably would have more change of population than, say, Mayerthorpe. People I grew up with here 40 years ago are still here, and I can go down the street and tell you who lives there. In Whitecourt, a transient town, they move. It

seems we're closer to our people in rural Alberta regardless of the number – regardless of the number, Pat. I would be willing to take a challenge that if you had 15,000 voters in Calgary and I had 15,000 voters in Whitecourt, I would know more. You would do the same job as me, but it's just the system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On this point, Reeve Terry and then Mike.

MR. NELSON: If I may comment, I think in a rural area people have more awareness – I'll put it that way; it's maybe not a good way to put it – of what's happening politically in the province. It doesn't matter whether you go to – for example, last night we went to a housewarming. Immediately discussion starts about politics: who's doing what in the government and different MLAs. That's why everybody is aware of who the MLA is. Whether he's at a fair or he's at a family reunion or a 50th anniversary, they want to get over and talk to him, give him a point of view however important or not important it may be; if nothing else, just to talk to him. I think that may be one of the differences between a rural and urban constituency. I know I have relatives that live in the city of Edmonton, and they don't even know who their MLA is, let alone want to go talk to him or express a viewpoint or something like that. So it's a matter of interest and being aware and wanting to contribute or be part of it. That's a personal observation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Just quickly on that point. I want to apologize, first of all, for coming late. I had other commitments. I left early this morning and drove through only two constituencies to get here. That's just an indication of how far we are apart.

I guess as far as knowing your constituents, I don't really, as an MLA, believe a hundred percent that that's necessary. I think if you come right down to it, the standard of living you're able to provide for your constituents and the quality of services – the quality of living is probably more important than knowing them personally. Sometimes in rural Alberta, that's where it's really hard for us to provide the quality of living that the urban centres manage. They have a lot higher standard of living than a lot of my constituents, and the opportunity to access services is just not there. I can't send one of my constituents down to a government office next door; they're not there. I think those are some of the concerns I'd have. Instead of knowing a pile of people, I would hope that I could provide a high quality of services and a high standard of living for my constituents, and I think we have to go back to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: If I may, I've just got to counter one point that Mike said. Maybe I'll try and wrap this up in my concluding remarks, Mr. Chairman. We've talked about diversity of interests in rural parts of the province. I look for similarities. In all of the presentations we've had, whether they've been in urban centres or rural communities, most presenters have said that there's a diversity of interests within their own community, and that's from their perspective. Everybody believes, though, that their perspective is unique, and therefore they have a diversity of interests in their own constituency. I'm finding that that's more likely the common thread, that everybody believes their own community has a community of interest.

With respect to standards of living, though, you can take a look at the constituencies of Calgary-Forest Lawn or Edmonton-Highlands and Edmonton-Norwood, and you can see a great deal of poverty and problems that are unique to the inner city. They might be more spread out in the vast constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche, but they're very real inside a number of inner-city communities. I've got a marvelous constituency, as I'm sure every MLA would suggest: that they have a marvelous constituency. I have farms, I have industry, I've got abject poverty, and I've got a very, very comfortable middle class. I don't think I've got too many that would qualify as the absolute rich, but there's certainly a diversity of interests and a diversity of community within the small geographical area that I have the honour to represent.

When we look at the role of the MLA, every member of the Legislature is seen to be doing his or her job providing they're accountable and accessible to the constituents. The minute a constituent is dissatisfied with a response they get, whether the response is correct or incorrect, or if they're not able to access their member of the Legislature, all of a sudden in the opinion of that constituent that member of the Legislature is no longer doing their job. If it's a matter of having 31,000 constituents, as is the case in Edmonton-Whitemud, and some constituents may have to wait for an appointment, that's difficult for those constituents that have to wait. If it's a matter of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, with 9,000 constituents, and they've got to wait a while for their member of the Legislature to travel back to their community, that too is difficult for the constituent.

So what this committee has to do is try and somehow find some kind of formula that will hopefully approach a degree of equity and fairness. It's not going to be an easy task, but it's a task that I think we will wrestle with and hopefully come to some degree of consensus about. It is a task that we must address now that we have a Charter of Rights in Canada which says that we have to look at things in a very different light.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any final concluding comments by visitors?

Okay. We'll have a wrap-up, then, by the committee members. Going back to you, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I've made mine, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

Pat.

MRS. BLACK: I'd just like to thank the people of Mayerthorpe. I've enjoyed it. I did a little shopping before the meeting, as is usual. I arrived a little early and enjoyed that. Actually, we had quite a successful little day. Anyway, Peter, thank you for your hospitality.

I'm delighted, Tom, that you're thinking formula. That thrills me to no end.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat, we're always delighted to get a little urban money out in rural Alberta. When we were in Vulcan for a hearing prior to Christmas, Pat arrived early and went into the hardware store and found a pair of skates. She was absolutely delighted.

MRS. BLACK: For my little boy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: She'd been shopping for skates for her son,

and she found the skates. So there you go.

Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks for coming out, gentlemen. We appreciate your comments. We'll have to try to do the best we can with our committee to see if we can satisfy everyone's needs. When we realize that that won't happen, hopefully you'll be able to live with the results that come out. Peter, thanks for coming out today as well.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.

Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Again I want to thank the presenters, and I apologize again for being late. I guess, as the members here say, it's not an easy job, but we would hope that whatever we come up with, we are fair to all Albertans and that we can come up with a process that will keep Alberta together and happy rather urban and rural; that would be the last thing we want to see in the province. I'd like to thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I can't really add anything that hasn't been said.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, just in final summation, then, again thank you for the six presentations we did have today: the two in absentia and the four of you who did give presentations. As has been indicated, we will be releasing our report once we've completed our work, and we will be sending a copy of the report to all those who have attended the hearings. So you will receive a copy of our final report. The recommendations, of course, will be debated in the Assembly, so we expect your member and the other 82 members of the Assembly to be in a position to have the fullest amount of information available in the process.

As I indicated in my opening comments, the purpose of our visit is really twofold: we're here to share information with you, but from our perspective, more importantly, we're here to gain knowledge from you. We're here to get your input, your ideas on how to tackle and solve this very delicate matter and, as some panelists have mentioned, to ensure that what we do is Charter-proof. We do not wish to see our work – to put it in perspective, the committee was appointed one year ago Wednesday. That's how long we've been in existence as a committee. So we don't want all of our work to go for naught. We want to ensure that what we do recommend is indeed Charter-proof.

We're also determined to ensure that it's fair and equitable across the province. We've had some excellent briefs. It was so refreshing and encouraging last evening in St. Albert to hear from someone who's lived in a city, I believe, all his life, who is active in the Boy Scout movement and works in the northern region, which is basically Highway 16 north, to hear from an urbanite that distance is a factor and that distance should be taken into account and factored in when you're looking at the matter. That's great, because it means that there's an understanding. What we have to try to do – because, as others have said, we can't please everyone – is ensure that there's a better understanding of the role of a member and the importance not only of that member being able to communicate with constituents but of constituents getting to the member.

If we lived in an ideal world, rural members would trade places with urban members for about six months every year or so. Peter and I and Mike would have an education if we had to walk in the shoes of Tom and Pat and Frank and vice versa. We don't live in a perfect world – that's not going to happen – so we have to do the best we can with what we've got.

So, in conclusion, again thanks for coming out and sharing your thoughts and ideas with us. We do appreciate it. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 1:15 p.m.]