

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[7:02 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will now declare the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries meeting being held here in Wetaskiwin officially open, and with that, a special welcome to all of you for coming out in the middle of the summer to be with us on an evening when you have many other things you'd like to be doing.

As you know, we had 29 hearings across the province prior to the spring sitting of the Legislature, and due to requests from a number of communities in constituencies where we had not held hearings that we come back, the committee deliberated and did, in fact, make a recommendation to the Assembly that our mandate be extended so that we could hold 10 additional hearings. This hearing tonight is one of those 10. We will conclude the hearing portion of our work by the end of this week, and it is then our task during September and October to sit down and try to develop a report. Through an amendment made to our order, we have the ability to make the report public once it's been completed, so the report will be made public before it's debated in the Assembly. That is a first in at least recent history in Alberta, in that traditionally select reports are presented to the Legislature and then made public. Everyone who is here this evening - I believe you've all registered and given us an address - it's our intent to ensure that each of you receives a copy of the final report.

In a moment I'm going to introduce the panel members and just give you an idea of the process we follow through the evening, but before I do that I want to comment about these microphones, because we don't want anyone to feel inhibited or intimidated by the microphones. They are here so that we can record all the proceedings, and there's a written record kept through *Hansard*. That written record, of course, is available to the public, as the final report will be. So we're required to do that, but we've tried to keep our meetings as informal as possible.

The process we follow is that we normally invite a couple of presenters forward. We'll go through the first presentation. Once that's been completed, members of the committee will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and then we throw it open to those of you in the audience if you have a question or comment you'd like to make relative to that brief. We've indicated to members who are presenting briefs that if it's a lengthy brief, you're not required to read it word for word; you can highlight the brief. We will take the brief and ensure that it is put in our records in that basis. Because we can't possibly keep straight all the points made at each and every one of the hearings, through computer we are keeping a list of the various points made in each and every brief, so that if we want to pull out the most important point made, we can do so; if we want the secondary point, we can do so; if we want to know how many briefs talked about distance as a factor, we can do so; if we want to know how many focused right on population as that being the criterion for determining the boundaries, we can do so.

So that's part of the process that we're following. We will have a short presentation before we get into the hearings themselves, and that will be to give you some background. But before we do that I'd like to introduce the panel members who are here today.

Starting on my immediate right, Pam Barrett. Pam is the New Democratic member of the Assembly for Edmonton-Highlands. She is now in her second term. She's the House leader for her caucus and, therefore, a very active member of the Assembly. Next to Pam is Mike Cardinal. Mike is a Conservative member

of the Assembly and represents the constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche. This is the first term for Mike, and he's certainly been busy with all the activities in Athabasca, let alone functions and responsibilities on this particular committee. Tom Sigurdson. Tom is the New Democratic member of the Assembly for Edmonton-Belmont. Like Pam, he is in his second term. He served as the late Grant Notley's assistant for a period of time, so he did have an opportunity to work in the old Spirit River-Fairview constituency; it's now called Dunvegan. As well, the late Mr. Notley served on a previous Electoral Boundaries Commission, so Tom did have some experience in that particular capacity. The next gentleman needs no introduction here: the Hon. Don Sparrow, who is the host MLA for us this evening and one of the reasons we're here. Don, we're delighted to have you with us.

Going down the other side of the table: Frank Bruseker. Frank is a Liberal member of the Assembly, and he represents the constituency of Calgary-North West. This is his first term in the Assembly. He's working hard on this committee and getting a taste of rural Alberta. We're delighted to have Mr. Pat Ledgerwood with us. Pat is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta, and while he's not an official member of the committee, it was our collective view that our committee would be strengthened if we had his wisdom and input. Pat has not only been involved in provincial elections in the past; he was a member of the federal commission which saw redistribution take place. So he has experience in that particular field.

In addition to the committee members who are here, Bob Pritchard is the senior administrator for the committee, and he is seated at the table with us. Ted Edwards is at the back of the room. Most of you met Ted when you registered. We have Doug and Paula with us from *Hansard*, and they are recording.

I'm now going to ask Pat to lead us through the background, the British Columbia court case which is the reason our committee was struck, and once that's been done, then Tom will lead us through a slide presentation to show you some population statistics and constituencies, so that we have that background before we actually lead into the presentations. So if we could proceed with you, Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Alberta legislation is such that a commission must be struck after every second general election. Our last commission was in 1983-84. We've had the 1986 general election and the 1989 general election, so normally a commission would have been struck at the first sitting of the First Session and under normal conditions would have just about completed the redistribution process. However, the impact of the B.C. court decision is such that it generated these public hearings.

The situation in British Columbia was that they had their lowest electoral division at a population of 5,500; their largest had a population of over 68,000. The British Columbia government had a commission headed by a Justice Fisher appointed in April of 1987, and they completed their report in December of 1988. There were three main points in the Fisher commission. One was that they eliminate the dual-member ridings. It doesn't impact on us. They increased the number of MLAs from 69 to 75, which doesn't impact on us. But what they determined was that there should be, in accordance with the Charter and also with other jurisdictions, equal weight for each elector. What they did was decide that an average of plus or minus 25 percent would be appropriate. So they took the total population of British Columbia, divided it by 75, and then used that average

plus or minus 25 percent to come up with the electoral divisions that they have.

A Professor Dixon and some of his associates didn't think the B.C. government was reacting fast enough to this Fisher commission, and the case was heard before the Chief Justice of the B.C. Supreme Court, Madam Chief Justice McLachlin. The point we're primarily interested in is that she ruled that the average plus or minus 25 percent was reasonable. There was no appeal to this court decision. The B.C. government still didn't react, so Professor Dixon and his associates again went to court, and the case was heard before a Justice Meredith. Justice Meredith basically supported the decision of Justice McLachlin, but he said that he could not overthrow the government and dissolve the government in that the courts were not there to govern; the courts were not there to legislate. So he said that although he felt that current B.C. boundaries didn't fit the Charter, he was not about to take any action, and he passed it back to the government. The government in 1989 formed a commission, and they only made very minor changes to the Fisher commission report. They have the new boundaries which came into effect January of this year, and they're all at average, plus or minus 25 percent.

So with that background, Tom will now tell us what the situation is in Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Pat.

Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just wait for the lights to go off here and the lights to go up on the wall. There we go. Now I can't see my instructions. That's fine; my eyes will soon adjust.

The first slide that you now see is the listing of all 83 constituencies in our province, and they're listed in alphabetical order. In the next slide you'll begin to appreciate the differences, because what we've done here is taken all 83 constituencies and listed them in numerical order according to the number of electors per electoral division. If I could just point out that the one footnote is with Cardston. The Cardston constituency, according to the enumeration lists, is the lowest in the province. However, because the Blood Indian Band, which is wholly contained within the boundaries of the Cardston constituency, chose not to be involved in the electoral process and would not allow any enumerators on the reserve, there are approximately 1,800 people that were probably left off the voters lists. So Cardston is a bit of an anomaly.

If we add up all the voting population in our province - all those people that are on the voters lists - we end up with approximately one and a half million Albertans that are eligible to vote. If we divide that by the 83 constituencies, we end up with an average of 18,600. Now, again, according to the decision in British Columbia that permitted a variance off the average of plus or minus 25 percent, if you add 25 percent to the average, you get 23,356; if you subtract 25 percent off the average, you end up with 14,014 electors. Returning, then, to the list of constituencies in numerical order, you will see that those constituencies that are highlighted in green are over the average plus 25 percent; those constituencies highlighted in pink are those constituencies that are average less 25 percent. Putting that on the map of the province, you can see that there are a number of constituencies that are well below the average less 25 percent. There are two constituencies on this map that are highlighted in green. You would have some difficulty making them out, so I will help you. They are: in the southwest corner,

Medicine Hat; and just by the city of Edmonton, the city of St. Albert.

This is the map of Calgary. There are nine constituencies in Calgary that are average plus 25 percent over. Again, if we just quickly flip to the map of Edmonton, you can see that there are eight constituencies that have the average plus 25 percent. In both Calgary and Edmonton the periphery of the city is still growing. Housing development is taking place, and so we have population increases on the periphery of the city.

The constituencies of Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West have remained pretty constant over the course of time, and there is no problem envisaged with that particular city or the constituencies therein. However, Medicine Hat has the fourth highest population in the province of any constituency at almost 30,000 eligible voters.

These are the two constituencies of Red Deer: Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South. Prior to the 1983-84 redistribution the Red Deer constituency was one constituency, and it was in the boundary of the city limits. It was far too large, and so the commission was instructed to create two constituencies. Creating two constituencies put the population figures under the necessary numbers for an urban constituency, so what happened was that the commission then went outside into Red Deer county and pulled in sufficient numbers of electors to build up the numbers to justify two constituencies. So what you've got here: the brown line is the line of the municipality, the city of Red Deer; the black line, the outermost line, is the boundary of the constituency. So there's some rural and urban mix in Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South.

This is the city of St. Albert, another area where it is well above the average plus 25 percent.

If we now go back again to a map of our province, these constituencies that are highlighted in purple are constituencies that have a voter population 35 percent below the average. So this is just to do a little comparison with the previous map.

This map shows those constituencies that are 50 percent below the average; there are five constituencies in southern Alberta.

These are the hearings that the committee is attending last week and this. These are in addition to the I think 29 previous meetings that we held around the province prior to the Legislature going into spring session. These blue dots indicate those areas in the province that our committee has visited. To try and show you that we've tried to get around to those areas that may be most affected by any decision that the committee makes, we've put the dots alongside those constituencies that have voter populations 35 percent below the average.

One of the questions that first came up when our committee met was that in our province we only have the division of electoral districts based on the number of people that are eligible to vote. In other jurisdictions in Canada there are provinces that permit boundary redistribution based on the total number of people that are living in a constituency. So, for example, as I cited earlier, the Cardston constituency which had 1,800 people that were probably left off the list - that made an artificially low number in that constituency. There are religious communities that choose to not participate in the electoral process. Landed immigrants are not eligible to vote. We spend a good portion of our provincial budget on people that have no electoral right, and those are the people that are under the age of 18; they're students. Yet every member of the Legislature represents those students, those Indians, those landed immigrants. So we thought: what would happen if we were to take the total population and then divide that population by 83?

We had to rely on the 1986 census, and we have almost two and

half million people in our province. Divided by the 83 constituencies, we ended up with a population average per constituency of 28,500. If you add 25 percent, you have a total population at the top end of 35,630 and at the bottom end of 21,378.

Now, that may not seem like a great deal until you start taking a look at our maps again. You'll start to see the difference. Again the constituencies highlighted in green are those constituencies that are over the 25 percent; highlighted in pink are those constituencies that are under 25 percent. But you might note that, if you recall, the Cardston constituency was at the very bottom. While it's not come out of the pink area, it has moved up quite significantly on that list of constituencies that fall below 25 percent.

Putting it on the map of the province, you'll see a number of changes. In addition to Medicine Hat and St. Albert, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray are now above the 25 percent when you take a look at total population.

This is Calgary. Calgary goes from having nine constituencies that were over the average by 25 percent down to seven that are over average. Edmonton goes from eight constituencies that were over the 25 percent above the average to seven constituencies. So it makes a bit of a difference.

Where you start to see a real difference, though, is the number of constituencies that are 35 percent below average. When we only had the voters on the list, we had 16 constituencies; we now have 12. There is only one constituency that remains 50 percent below average when you use a total population figure.

As I said, we've been all around the province. We've also gone to Winnipeg, Regina, and Victoria; in the not too distant past all three western provinces have had electoral reform. Manitoba has divided its constituencies based on a voter population average of plus or minus 10 percent. Saskatchewan has taken all of its constituencies and given a voter population average with a variance of plus or minus 25 percent with the exception of two northern constituencies; they have permitted a minus 50 percent for the two northern constituencies. British Columbia has, as you heard from the Chief Electoral Officer, gone to its 25 percent plus or minus.

This is hearing 33, I think. There's the list of the hearings that we've had around the province. We've now had, I think, well over 700 people attending our public hearings, close to 300 presentations, and probably 125 written submissions to date.

So that's the slide presentation. If there are any questions, I'd be pleased to answer them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom. Okay. If there are no questions of Tom or Patrick, we'll proceed with the presentations.

Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: If we could have the first two presenters come up: Frank Coutney and Brian Rhiness.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank, would you like to proceed first, please? Are you here as an individual or on behalf of a municipality or group?

MR. COUTNEY: My name is Frank Coutney, county administrator, county of Wetaskiwin.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can everyone hear? If you can't hear once Frank begins, just signal me so that I can see.

MR. COUTNEY: Mr. Chairman, I would like to read the brief, if you don't mind, and go through it actually line by line. The letter is addressed to Bob Bogle, chairman of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries.

The council of the county of Wetaskiwin has considered the provincial government's intent to examine Alberta's system of provincial electoral boundaries, and would like to take this opportunity to voice its several concerns.

Council's first concern is that one of the alternatives on which the change of boundaries could be made is based solely on population. Such change could lead to an imbalance between urban and rural representation within the provincial government. Such imbalance could underrepresent rural Alberta in government decision-making on issues which directly affect Alberta's rural municipalities and their residents. We realize that the Electoral Boundaries Commission must review the integration of legal decisions, geography, demographics, and other factors in determining the electoral boundaries within the province of Alberta.

Several considerations must be examined. Rather than being based strictly on population allocation to provide reasonable representation for the rural electors, the county of Wetaskiwin wishes to provide the following alternatives which we believe must be considered in the review of electoral boundaries. These issues are vital to the daily operations of the provincial government and its MLAs' relations with their constituents.

Demographic. Total population has no relationship to the total number of electors within a constituency. The exodus of younger families from the farm to larger urban centres leaves an aging population in rural areas. The percentage of eligible voters would, therefore, be higher in rural Alberta. Although Alberta's total population has increased by 49 percent since 1971, the rural population has increased only by 5 percent. In fact, rural population has decreased from 37 percent of the total population in 1979 to 26 percent in 1989. If population dictates the size of an MLA's boundaries, the larger rural constituencies such as Peace River would have to expand to accommodate such regulations. Such expansion would create less direct contact with each elector over a larger geographic area and cause difficulty in representing the electors at large.

Geography. Geographic areas should be included in the review of electoral boundaries. The county of Wetaskiwin currently has four MLAs within its municipal boundaries: Don Sparrow, Wetaskiwin-Leduc; Tom Thurber, Drayton Valley; Halvar Jonson, Ponoka-Rimbey; and Ken Rostad, Camrose. Difficulties can arise when issues involve two or more MLAs within one municipality. As an example, differences in MLAs' priorities in secondary road programs could create conflicts within a municipality.

MLAs' responsibilities. Over the years provincial politics have changed, with major shifts in electors' attitudes necessitating MLAs to have more direct contact with their electors. Electors have become more demanding, which has increased the workload of each rural elected official. Wetaskiwin-Leduc constituency is unique, as there are two cities and two counties located within its boundaries. Each has its own trading centre and concerns. Therefore, within the Wetaskiwin-Leduc constituency MLA Don Sparrow has to deal with more than 132 organizations, whereas urban MLAs would deal with considerably fewer boards, organizations and, particularly, municipal governments.

In summary, the rural people of Alberta could find themselves being overshadowed and outvoted in crucial decisions negatively affecting rural people at a time when primary importance must be given to rural concerns. The council of the county of

Wetaskiwin, therefore, respectfully encourages the provincial government to ensure that any change in electoral boundaries would not disturb equal representation for rural and urban areas across the province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Frank.
Any questions from the panel members? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you very much for your presentation, Frank.

Frank, there's a phenomenon that seems to be happening, and it's not just happening in Alberta. It's rural depopulation. It's pretty much global. Currently, according to Statistics Canada, Alberta is the most urbanized province in Canada. I think it would be generous to say that 60 percent of Albertans live in urban centres, 40 percent live in rural centres. You're arguing that the ratio of 50-50 should pretty much be maintained. If we continue on in rural depopulation – and there's no reason to suggest that it won't continue on the path it's going – is there any point on that line, if we get to 70-30 or any number along there, that you would suggest a change in the ratio between urban and rural representation?

MR. COUTNEY: I think when we take a look at rural Alberta, they have certain concerns that have to be dealt with, and if we continue to erode the number of elected officials that represent the importance of the rural people and their views and concerns, we're going to miss the point of what the rural people are out there for. Alberta has an agriculture-based industry, and I think it's important that we keep the views of rural Alberta in the Legislature in the province of Alberta.

MR. SIGURDSON: Let me just rephrase that then, Frank. Do you believe that a government should be made up of majority representation? If 100,000 people vote one way and 50,000 people vote a different way, who should be the governing party?

MR. COUTNEY: I think basically what we have to look at is how we are going to represent the people equitably. I know what you're trying to say, but I think there's still rural Alberta that we've got to look after, and it's important that rural Alberta have a voice in our government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.

MR. SIGURDSON: So you don't believe in majority representation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: In fairness, he's answered the question. You may not like the answer, but he has answered.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I'm just trying for clarification.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's fine. Are there any other questions you'd like to ask?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, that's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Anyone else?

Okay. Does anyone from the audience have a question? Yes, sir.

MR. HINKLAY: Along the same lines, historically we have been a rural province, and the balance of power did rest with

the rural areas. Was it fair at that time that the urban areas should be underrepresented, and now that change has occurred, this urbanization, are we saying that we do not have to accept the fact that there have been changes?

MR. COUTNEY: Basically, I think you're asking the same kind of question that came from the panel. I think what I'm trying to say is that rural Alberta is still there, and if we start eroding rural Alberta to a point where their voice, what concerns them, is not heard in the Legislature – and they're quite unique from the urbans – we're going to lose rural Alberta. I think rural Alberta has to be heard.

MR. HINKLAY: Maybe it's repetition. Does the urban voice, though, not count?

MR. COUTNEY: Do they know the issues of rural Alberta? Maybe I'll ask you that question. I think working in a county system versus an urban system, there are different concerns and different issues out there with the people in rural Alberta. They have to be heard. You have to sit back and realize that urban residents have certain concerns, and they're totally different from the people in the rural area.

MR. HINKLAY: What would be the factor to determine fairness?

MR. COUTNEY: What I'm saying here is that we shouldn't look at strictly population. We should be looking at other factors: the demographic, the geographic. Population should be looked at – I'm not saying totally – but not as the main factor on deciding boundaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks.
Frank, you have a question for Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. Frankly speaking here, just a question. I'm wondering if perhaps we're not getting a little too hung up on the terms "rural" and "urban." I agree with you and I think everyone on the panel agrees that all Albertans regardless of where they live deserve to have representation. But when I look at the figures you provided in the chart, in essence this attachment page 1 that I'm looking at, depending upon whether you consider those cities and towns of 5,000 to 10,000 to be urban or rural – I'm not sure which – you're looking at 74 percent in an urban type of setting. I'm wondering if maybe in our legislation that we propose we shouldn't simply eliminate the terms "urban" and "rural", eliminate this concern, and talk about getting effective representation for Albertans. Because as this gentleman pointed out, when the province was started, 92 percent of the MLAs were considered to be rural MLAs. Edmonton and Calgary had the other 8 percent. So I'm wondering if we should just eliminate that. How would you feel about seeing that in the legislation we propose, that we eliminate those terms? Maybe we're getting hung up on the labels.

MR. COUTNEY: No. I don't think the terms really have anything to do with what we're discussing. We're talking the city of Edmonton, the city of Medicine Hat, the city of Calgary versus the city and the county of Wetaskiwin. Our concerns, being the city of Wetaskiwin and the county of Wetaskiwin, are totally different than the city of Edmonton. So when I talk about us as rural, I'm talking residents in the city of Wetaskiwin.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Don, I would think this is a unique constituency. You have two cities and yet it's viewed as a rural constituency. So possibly, as Frank has said, we do get too hung up on titles like "urban" and "rural."

Anything else? Any other questions? Okay. Thanks very much, Frank. We'll move on then.

Brian.

MR. RHINESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Brian Rhiness, and tonight I'm representing the Wetaskiwin district Chamber of Commerce. I'd like to start off by welcoming you to Wetaskiwin on behalf of the chamber and thanking you for coming to our city and giving us the opportunity to provide you with some of our ideas on the principles that should be looked at when looking at electoral boundary changes. I'll just read directly off the notes I have here.

The primary purpose of a review of electoral boundaries in Alberta must be to ensure that the quality of representation is maintained or improved. As the committee travels the province, I'm sure they sense that the definition of "representation" is changing. The public is expecting more from their MLA.

Firstly, the public expects direct access to their MLA. This means that the MLA is close by and convenient to get to. This is quite easy to accomplish in urban centres where the MLA's office may be only a matter of a few blocks and bus service is available. In rural areas the distance can be measured in many miles. In these cases convenience becomes the important factor. People expect access to their MLA where they normally do business. In the Wetaskiwin area we have a situation where a major portion of Wetaskiwin county has been split off. The people in this part of the county normally do their trading in Wetaskiwin. Their business and social centre is Wetaskiwin. The county of Wetaskiwin administration is centred in the city of Wetaskiwin. These people, however, have an MLA centred in Drayton Valley.

Provincial election boundaries should reflect and respect existing municipal structures and trading patterns and work with these as much as possible. If possible, a single MLA should represent an entire county or district. At the present time the county of Wetaskiwin boards must work with four different MLAs. This makes no sense in our minds. In rural areas such as this the number of groups, organizations, boards, and councils that an MLA must work with is significant and is increasing. Any provincial boundary structure must ensure that these groups have ready access to provincial government representation without confusion or the necessity for multiple MLA contacts. The public demands more interaction with their MLA. This means both problem solving and communication of government policy and issues. By ensuring the provincial and municipal boundaries complement each other, this communication can be more effectively tailored to meet the specific needs of community groups.

The use of population should be only one issue used to set boundaries. Of course, population size in each riding should be kept relatively the same. Where population does not meet the minimum criteria, that should not necessarily mean boundary changes. Other criteria such as municipal boundaries, trading areas, et cetera, should carry more weight. We should also look at total population rather than just voting population. While an MLA is elected by those meeting the minimum voting age, once elected, the MLA represents everyone.

Alberta has historically maintained an almost equal mix of urban and rural ridings. This recognizes both the large population centres and the significance of rural centres in the economy

of the province. What rural areas lack in population they more than make up for in investment and contribution to the economy and the way of life in Alberta. The obvious example is agriculture. We must continue to recognize the fundamental fabric of Alberta and maintain the equal mix of urban and rural representation in the Legislature. In setting or revising boundaries, we must avoid simply adding more ridings and MLAs. We do not need more representation; we need better representation. If we must increase the population or the area that an MLA must cover, so be it. An increase in funding for constituency offices and staff would do more to improve services than adding another MLA. The total number of MLAs should not be raised above the current level.

On behalf of the Wetaskiwin and district Chamber of Commerce, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present our points tonight, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Brian.

Pam.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. I'd just like to clarify some of the wording. The second paragraph from the top on page 2: "Other criteria, such as municipal boundaries, trading areas, et cetera, should carry more weight." More weight than the principle of voter equality by defining a population average and pursuing that as a target?

MR. RHINESS: If a certain area falls outside that criteria . . .

MS BARRETT: If it does not fall outside that criteria, do you then make representation on behalf of voter equality or do you make representation more favourably toward the current 50-50 mix despite the fact that 60 percent of the population is now urban? It's not clear. I'm not trying to corner you; it's not clear. If you had to take your druthers, which druther would you take?

MR. RHINESS: Okay. I think what we're trying to say here is that we don't want population alone to be the factor.

MS BARRETT: Can you say which your druther is when you're forced to make a decision?

MR. RHINESS: I'm not sure whether we have to make that decision or not. I think what we're saying is that in cases where we find that a certain area, a current riding, for example, falls outside the norm as so defined on the wall there earlier and if changing that riding boundary is going to interfere with the trading patterns and the municipal boundaries and those types of concepts, then leave it alone. Don't disrupt the fabric of life in that particular area simply to meet a number which is arbitrarily arrived at by dividing the number of voters or population by the number of ridings. That doesn't seem to me to be a very realistic way of looking at life and the way people deal in their everyday lives.

MS BARRETT: Okay. I'm sorry to do this, but there are two statements here that still aren't coming together. You say you want to maintain the equal mix of urban and rural representation in the Legislature. You also say orally, although not quite so specifically in writing, that the use of population figures is a valid mechanism for deciding boundaries.

MR. RHINESS: It's one of the areas, yes.

MS BARRETT: That's right. You can see, and I can certainly see, that there's a problem sometimes in trying to adhere to both principles. If you must choose one, which one do you choose? Which one should I take as being the primary statement out of this paper?

MR. RHINESS: Well, I think we want to maintain the mix.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For clarification, I do note that at the top of that paragraph you say, "The use of population should be only one issue used to set boundaries," and then you go on to talk about other factors like municipal boundaries, trading areas, and so on.

MS BARRETT: I didn't miss that point.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks, Brian. A very good presentation, very well organized and well thought out. Just a question along the same lines. That second paragraph says that "population size in each riding should be kept relatively the same." Do you mean within the riding the population of that riding should be the same or all the ridings compared to one another, all of the 83, should be relatively the same?

MR. RHINESS: I know what you're trying to get at here, and I appreciate the issue we're dealing with. If we can do our best to get within your 25 percent or whatever you're shooting at, great. That's fine. I understand the concept. The big "but" is: we have to look at other things, and if we have to, in my opinion, ignore the 25 percent . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. So you're saying go with the 25 percent if it works, but if it doesn't, well then, that's life. The question I have that comes out of that, then, is: how do you decide when the 25 percent rule doesn't work? Because what happened in British Columbia is that the judge that traveled around the province, Judge Fisher, just said, "Well, here we go; here are some boundaries using 25 percent" and left it up to the Legislature to make up their minds, which could conceivably happen here. I don't know. I mean, how do you decide when?

MR. RHINESS: Good question.

MR. BRUSEKER: I was wondering if you had considered that.

MR. RHINESS: No, I don't have an answer to that. I don't think there's an easy answer, obviously.

MR. BRUSEKER: No, I know there's not. That's why I was hoping you'd give us one.

MR. RHINESS: No, I don't have an answer to that question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, for the information of the audience, the other factor is that in our neighbouring provinces – and as Tom mentioned, we did go to Winnipeg, Regina, and British Columbia – we found that in their particular legislation Saskatchewan and British Columbia do allow for larger ridings, larger in a geographic sense but smaller in a population sense, in the more scarcely populated parts of the province. So I think there was a recognition factor. The federal government: there are two seats in the Northwest Territories; there's one seat in

the Yukon. Certainly in terms of population the Northwest Territories isn't entitled to two seats. They're not entitled to one if you were looking at straight population alone. Prince Edward Island has four seats because it has four Senators. So there are some factors.

In some of the advice we've been given by legal advisers – and we've had a number of advisers and they haven't been consistent – one factor that has come through is that if you are looking at any variance from a provincial average, you should justify it. You should state why it's higher or lower or significantly higher or significantly lower.

Frank, were there any other points?

MR. BRUSEKER: No, that's all. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Pam? Anyone from the audience? Thanks very much, Brian.

Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: Would Ken Kobly and Bruce Hinkley come up, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ken, would you like to proceed, please?

MR. KOBLY: Mr. Chairman, my name is Ken Kobly. I'm the mayor of Beaumont, one of the towns in this riding. Thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation. I do not have a written presentation; I have a brief verbal presentation.

I appreciate the opportunity, that the provincial government is asking us for our input on this matter. In the last federal redraw of the election boundaries, unfortunately our municipality was moved into another riding without the municipality really knowing until it was too late. We were moved into the Elk Island constituency. We find in our area that we have much more in common with Leduc and Wetaskiwin than we do with Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan.

One of the concerns we do have in any provincial redraw – and I apologize if I'm speaking more to our local concerns than to the province as a whole – is being moved in with a city riding. We are what some people may classify as an urban community. The majority of our residents commute to the city of Edmonton and work in the city of Edmonton. We're about five miles south of the city boundaries. But we would have a definite concern with any redraw that would draw us into representation by a city MLA. We feel that we are a mix of urban and rural in Beaumont.

The question of representation, certainly either under population or by enumeration: I'm not really sure. I guess my belief is that effective representation is where the local MLA brings forward your concerns regardless of what the population in the municipality is, as long as that's not too far out of whatever magic number is drawn.

I believe that the contact we have with our local MLA to a large degree, from speaking to individuals who live in town and from speaking to individuals I deal with on a business basis in the city of Edmonton – in our municipality, if we have a problem with the provincial government, we phone our MLA. We don't talk to the department of social services or the department of highways or utilities or whoever. In the city of Edmonton or in large urban centres, I think what normally happens is that residents will talk to the department rather than talk to their MLA.

Currently our MLA has six municipalities to deal with. We've talked about the two counties, the two cities, but there are also

two towns in this riding that our MLA deals with. I believe the point was made earlier by Mr. Rhiness from Wetaskiwin that a city MLA definitely has fewer governments to deal with and fewer organizations to deal with. From statistics I saw about the 1971 census and what the number of ridings were at that point in time, it seems to me that the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton added together on a percentage were pretty much equivalent to what they are now, and the number of seats were pretty much equivalent to now. So I think if the distribution was okay then, it's probably okay now. The larger areas where the MLA has a large traveling distance: I think there should be some allowance for that. Because if you get into some of the larger ridings in the north, as you pointed out, where the MLA has a large area to travel in, I don't know if increasing the size of his riding to bring in more people is going to give those people effective representation or not. I don't think so.

That's my presentation, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ken.
Pam.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. You know, it's handy sitting next to the chairman. I can always say "I have a question" or "I have a comment" and I get to be the first one in.

I'm glad you came. That was really good of you, because I happen to know that a lot of people from Beaumont for some reason contacted me – I don't know why; I'm not federal – after they got moved. I know there's great dissatisfaction, and it's very obvious why. There isn't a natural connection to Elk Island. The natural connection is here. Right?

MR. KOBLY: That's right.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. So good for you for coming out, because you know, if people like you didn't, we would forget. The commission itself will be struck later on, and I want to just give you a good, broad political hint: you want to get out and talk to that commission too. Okay?

MR. KOBLY: Okay.

MS BARRETT: You make a good case for all sorts of things, but you said that you would like to make sure that population, again, not be the only deciding factor. But from your perspective, if you could have those nice little details like, you know, boundaries that line up with other levels of government, that make sense out of things, if you could have those things that make it orderly, would you then agree to a principle of targeting to within 25 percent plus or minus of the mean average number of voters unless unusual circumstances prevailed?

MR. KOBLY: I'm sorry. I don't know the background of where the magic number of 25 percent comes from.

MS BARRETT: That comes from a court ruling.

MR. KOBLY: Okay.

MS BARRETT: In some places in the world, in certain states, it doesn't matter if they've got to cut off the boundary halfway down the block. By God, if you don't fall right on target with that average, that's it. You can be taken to court for what's called gerrymandering.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just to give some background, the federal government uses a plus/minus 25 percent, as do a number of provinces. In British Columbia that was the recommendation, as Pat indicated, by the commission. When the matter went to court, the judge didn't sort of pick the figure out of the sky. She said that the figures used by the commission seemed reasonable and she agreed with them. That was that basis.

We had a group of legislators in Alberta this spring from the northwestern United States. Of course, remember they have an upper House, so there's an upper House which is there to protect regional interests. The lower House, on the other hand, is as precise to being one person/one vote as possible. The Speaker of the Washington state House told me in a discussion we were having that they're going through redistribution now and they're down to about 18 voters. They must be within 18 votes per riding. You can imagine how difficult that would be. In some cases you're dividing towns; it's not only dividing trading areas. Now, I go back to my earlier comment: they do have the upper House based on a regional representation which gives a balance to your lower House which is straight rep by pop.

MS BARRETT: So that's where that 25 percent figure comes from. By modern industrial world standards, it's not extreme. I can assure you it's on the conservative side compared to some of those areas.

MR. KOBLY: Okay. I think the plus or minus 25 percent – as you mentioned, it has been determined by a court, so I don't think there's a lot you can do with that. As the gentleman from Wetaskiwin pointed out, I think there has to be a concern for other things: for where your trading area is, where your concerns are. It can't be cut and dried plus or minus 25 percent.

Mr. Bogle, if they had changed it for every 18 votes in Beaumont, they'd likely have to change it every two months given our population and our birth rate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think they do it after every federal census, so they do it in a 10-year cycle. But when they do sit down to do it, to avoid a court challenge, that's how precise it's become.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Your Worship, I appreciate the presentation you make. The point you made at the very end was that you'd have to change things every two months in order to accommodate the number of people moving into Beaumont and being born into families there. Wetaskiwin-Leduc is a constituency that currently is in an area that's certainly not over the average. I'm looking at it. It's less than 1,000 away, though. Beaumont's growing. I think Wetaskiwin's growing. Other areas, other communities in this part of Alberta, are growing. Indeed, in the last redistribution I think there were parts of . . . What was the name of the constituency? Was it Wetaskiwin-Leduc then? They were taken away to support the population of other constituencies. At some point we're going to have a pretty large constituency in Wetaskiwin-Leduc, and we may very well find that it will be well over the 25 percent and we have to make a division and include other parts to ensure you do get that proper representation. I'm wondering. I guess it goes back to the point Frank makes: that if you've got what's currently designated a rural constituency that's becoming increasingly more urbanized, if we shouldn't get away from the designation of 'urban' – well, that was a term that was used the other night: urban and rural – and just have constituencies that are based on

the needs of the community by the number of constituents that are there.

MR. KOBLY: I think that works fine where you have rural/urban municipalities which wouldn't get dragged in with one of the major cities like Edmonton and Calgary. Our concern, as I mentioned: we're not really urban and we're not really rural; we're a mix of each. By far we have a lot more in common with our urban city to the south than we do with our urban city to the north. I think what you're saying about getting rid of the lines being drawn between rural and urban is probably very true, but I don't think you can draw an outside area into the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary.

MR. SIGURDSON: Can I just ask a follow-up question? I don't know if you can answer this, but I'm looking to you for some advice. You saw what happened in Red Deer where we had one constituency; it required two, but it couldn't justify having two. We've got that problem now in Medicine Hat. That's a small city in relative terms, of course, to Edmonton and Calgary, the large centres. Would you argue when you've got a city such as Medicine Hat surrounded by a constituency that has less than 50 percent - would that be one of the areas where you think you should still have an urban centre, or is that area too large? I seek your advice. I'm wondering how you as a mayor of a small community would feel if you were to look at being absorbed - maybe that's not the right term, but perhaps it is - by a community three or four times your size.

MR. KOBLY: I was born in Medicine Hat, so I know the area quite well, and I'm glad that you asked about that specific area. I think if the commission were to consider bringing Redcliff in with Medicine Hat, that would probably be acceptable to the residents. It's a lot different if you're the size of a Redcliff or the size of a Beaumont in comparison to the city of Medicine Hat than to take those two municipalities and compare them to the city of Edmonton. Quite frankly, one of our concerns was that when we looked at the map and saw Mill Woods, I believe, drastically over their limit, all of a sudden you'd perhaps split that area into two and . . . "Oh, here's a nice pocket of 5,000 people. To justify an additional area, let's bring them into Mill Woods."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ken, for clarification we should also indicate that in the hearings to date some have suggested we look at a combined urban/rural constituency, but no one advocated that for Edmonton or Calgary. I think the common belief was . . . In fact, we threw the question out - was it in St. Albert the other evening? - to see how the audience felt, if there would be anyone contrary to that way. The feeling was that the smaller cities in the province are more akin or have more in common with their rural neighbours and you could have a blend, a blended constituency that would work. Wetaskiwin-Leduc is an excellent example of it, with the two cities and the towns and the rural municipalities. You could do that in a Lethbridge or a Medicine Hat or a Red Deer or a Grande Prairie, but no one suggested that it be done in the metropolitan cities of Calgary and Edmonton. Is there anyone who would feel contrary to that here?

MR. KOBLY: Mr. Chairman, if I could add one thing. Mr. Sigurdson, I believe, made the point that the area is growing and that at some point in time we are going to have to look at a redraw. We heard that in Wetaskiwin they're dealing with four

separate MLAs, the county is. Perhaps when it comes to the time to draw the lines, when we get to the point when we're over our limit, whatever that settles out at, maybe consideration should be given to drawing along the county line. Then the MLA is dealing with one county and the county is dealing with one MLA rather than four.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Ken.
Yes, Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I should point out that Wetaskiwin-Leduc is the smallest rural electoral division, the very smallest in size. If you look at the county map, you'll find that the counties run east/west. As you know, your population centres run up highways 2 and 2A, which are north/south. Just a comment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any other comments from panel members? Anyone in the audience?

Thanks very much, Ken.
Bruce, we'll move on to you.

MR. HINKLAY: My name is Bruce Hinklay, and I'm representing the New Democrat association from Wetaskiwin-Leduc. I'd like to welcome you to Wetaskiwin. I'm very happy that it is informal. My presentation is very informal; I have one card.

I suspect after 29-plus presentations you're going to be well aware of the statistics that I'd like to present. I'm not here to say this is how it should be but just to give you another voice as to some concerns that our association has recognized. If it gets down to a point where you have to decide what will be the abstract principle on how you're going to make boundary changes, because I suspect there will be boundary changes, we would like to see it something fairly arbitrary such as population, as opposed to the values representing a particular group's interests. Numbers may be an easier way of dealing with it than special interest groups, without trying to elaborate on that.

Within the framework of the numbers, the 25 percent, a constituency can have 14,000 to 23,000. That's a 9,000 voter span. We're not saying that every constituency should have exactly 18,000. Those are good and fair parameters to work within. Now, within those parameters we agree with some of the other presentations that county/municipal boundaries are more important, that even something like a federal boundary would be quite important. For instance, Beaumont, although I may not totally agree, has more connection with us than they do with Sherwood Park. It's in another federal riding, and I guess personally I would like to see their provincial constituency in the same federal riding rather than having one federal minister and a provincial minister being totally different, totally representing different groups.

So population is the key thing, and we believe that such things as representation by population are very important as a criterion for making that decision. We do have some concerns that if you do not go by numbers - some people are saying it should be by area, yet three examples, Fort McMurray, Peace River, and Dunvegan, are the three largest areas in Alberta, and yet they represent 10,000, 15,000, possibly 20,000 voters. Two of those are within the boundaries, and they seem to be well represented. Saying we can't go large because we won't get proper, effective representation does not seem to apply to some of the areas that already are quite big and are within the 14,000 to 23,000. So to create some more areas that are as large is maybe . . . Well, if you say that's wrong, then Fort McMurray has been treated

unfairly for all these years; Dunvegan and Peace River have been treated unfairly all these years.

The other point which Brian Rhiness brought up that we totally agree with is that we are opposed to the creation of more MLAs. We have – what is it? – 83. We would like to stick to that number. Again, that could be a presentation in itself. Economic reasons. Whatever decision you make, our voice is saying: please do not increase the number of MLAs.

Then, finally, specifically dealing with the Beaumont concern, we recognize that Beaumont is growing but is in a different federal riding. I think if they're concerned about being amalgamated with Edmonton – I can sympathize with them – what do they think of the idea of being with Camrose or with the other cities in Clover Bar? I guess that's something they would have to decide. We're not in favour of pushing Beaumont out of our constituency into Edmonton but maybe aligning them with urban/rural areas such as Beaumont and Clover Bar, because I would prefer to see the western region of Wetaskiwin, the county of Wetaskiwin, part of the Wetaskiwin-Leduc constituency. As Pat mentioned, our counties go east and west and our ridings north and south. I would like to see more alignment east and west with the county and municipality.

I think that's pretty well all I have to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Bruce.

Questions from panel members? Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I have a question for Bruce. Being that your party is suggesting that we look at mainly distributing the constituencies by population, looking at the situation in Canada, would you then feel that the existing representation across Canada, with the majority of the seats in Quebec and Ontario, is fair for Canada? I mean, you'd be saying the same thing basically.

MR. HINKLAY: Okay. I guess if we believe in the abstracts of the debate, representation by population is a fair criterion. Canada was formed at one time taking certain criteria into consideration, the two founding groups. The picture of Canada, the makeup of Canadians has changed, and maybe it's time federally that the criteria that will determine the federal constituencies also has to change. Is that a good enough answer?

MR. CARDINAL: Yup.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only thing I'd point out while this exchange is taking place between the two of you is that Canada has an upper House, the Senate, and as unfair as we in the west may feel the Senate is, each of the regions was initially given 24 Senators, so there was to be a balance. If you look at it today, you could take the Senators from western Canada and the Senators from Atlantic Canada and they would outnumber the senators from central Canada. So there was to be a regional balance.

Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Two questions. One is a technical thing. You say that you'd like to have your alignment in the future more along the county lines, which go east to west. Well, what about trading relations? My feeling, at any rate, is that the trading relations are more north to south between communities. So if you could answer that, okay. And the other one would be: do you have any view on the composition of the Electoral

Boundaries Commission itself, how you would like to see that commission composed?

MR. HINKLAY: To answer your first question, I don't think that very many people in Beaumont shop in the Wetaskiwin area. Okay, I can clarify that better. I would suspect that they go to Leduc first, or maybe they might even go into Mill Woods, to Edmonton, first. Leduc would be second and Wetaskiwin would be third. Camrose and Sherwood Park, I really don't know. But I don't see the people of Beaumont coming into Wetaskiwin very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mayor, I'm not sure if you want to comment on that or not.

MR. KOBLY: Actually, I've got a few comments, Mr. Chairman, if you don't mind. We talk about our affinity with Camrose or Clover Bar. I can't remember any time in the last five years that I've set foot inside the city of Camrose. In the last year I've been in Leduc probably close to 45, 50 times, about once a week. Clover Bar: I'm not sure what the riding is, so I can't comment on that. I've been in Sherwood Park maybe twice in the last year, so that tells you where we trade with. Definitely, nobody's going to drive to Wetaskiwin to buy their groceries. People will likely come to Wetaskiwin to buy their cars. People will shop in Leduc; people shop in the city of Edmonton. But shopping for a commercial item, for commercial staples, is not the main, overriding factor. We're talking about all the factors that are involved.

One of the suggestions made was that we should be in the same federal riding. To put it bluntly – and I won't comment on the MP's representation; that's unfair when he's not here to defend himself. But when we talk about Beaumont, when we talk about the riding associations for example, all three of the riding associations of the major parties seem to have forgotten that Beaumont is part of Elk Island constituency. When they do their advertising, they forget Beaumont exists. That's an indication right there that when Beaumont gets amalgamated with someone to the north, they tend to be forgotten. We have a close association with Leduc, probably less of an association with Wetaskiwin itself.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. I appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we'll go on to the second question.

MR. HINKLAY: Okay. Pam, your second question was . . .

MS BARRETT: Do you have any feeling about who should sit on the Electoral Boundaries Commission, how many they should be?

MR. HINKLAY: Like this commission?

MS BARRETT: No, we're just a committee. We're not really the important guys.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's describe the makeup of the commission.

MS BARRETT: The commission actually draws the boundaries, and once the Legislature says how many ridings and what their certain targets are, they go out and draw them.

MR. HINKLAY: Well, will that commission be making their boundaries based upon your recommendations?

MS BARRETT: In principle, but they're going to have a lot of power.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They'll draw lines. If the legislation is as precise as what the last commission used, the criteria that's used will be prescribed to the commission.

But one of the mandates or one of the tasks we have as a committee is to recommend the makeup of the commission, what the commission should look like. Our past commission was chaired by a judge and had as members the Chief Electoral Officer for the province, four MLAs, three of whom were government and one opposition – that reflected the makeup of the Assembly at the time – and there was one citizen at large. We've noticed in the other three western provinces that the commissions varied from three members in Manitoba to one person in British Columbia. I've forgotten the number in Saskatchewan – three; thank you, Pat. But there were no current MLAs sitting on any of the commissions. Alberta was the only case where that occurred.

MR. HINKLAY: Well, did the commission's recommendations then go to the House?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. HINKLAY: I would say that this group here should be the commission. You are hearing everybody and you are making the recommendations. I think your recommendations should go directly to the House without going to another commission, then back to the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, Bruce, let us explain. We may have been remiss. Our task is to report directly to the Assembly this fall. We will respond to the matters that were put to us by the Assembly so that the Assembly in turn can look at legislation that brings the former legislation up to date, that addresses the concerns, the Charter of Rights as an example, and then from that a commission is struck and officially appointed. So I don't think you'd find anyone here advocating that the commission should be those of us sitting at this table. It's what the commission makeup should be. I think that was the essence of Pam's question too.

MR. HINKLAY: Well, off the cuff, I would say that most of the members of this group should be on that commission. It should be made up primarily of MLAs, because to me you're the ones that have talked to all the Albertans and are best able to represent all that group. Now, how the breakup should be amongst the parties, I suppose that's another issue, but I would say MLAs with some legal advisors should be in that group.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions or comments? Anyone from the audience? Yes, sir.

MR. NICKEL: Yeah. I just had one question with regards to your statement that you believe that Fort McMurray and some of the northern ridings you had mentioned were well represented. I was wondering on what basis you make that statement, because if an individual has to cover approximately 20,000 to 40,000 square miles of territory, how could you equate that with equal and fair representation?

MR. HINKLAY: Well, I suspect that most of the population of that riding, of that area, is centred in the city of Fort McMurray, so I suspect that he is very close to the majority of his constituents.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think, Bruce, if I can be of some help, a better example to give is Chinook. Now, Chinook is much smaller on the map, but Chinook is 100 percent settled. In other words, there are people living in all parts of that riding, whereas with McMurray you've got a ribbon development. As you've just said, 90 percent of the people live right in the city, and then a ribbon development along the railway and along the river up to Fort Chip and then from Fort McMurray down. Whereas in Chinook constituency you've got – well, Hanna is the largest town, with what? Twenty-five hundred population? And then a whole – I've forgotten the number of municipalities in the Chinook constituency, but around 20. So the MLA for that constituency has to crisscross the riding because there's someone who lives in every corner. Now, some of those ranches are pretty far apart, but there's still somebody living out there.

When we were in Hanna – and, by the way, we had to go back to Hanna to finish our hearings because there were so many people who came out with briefs for us because they were very concerned about the distances. Anyway, I didn't want to get between the two of you in your exchange.

MR. HINKLAY: My line of reasoning was that if in the past it was accepted that the area of Fort McMurray should have only one MLA, if that was okay in the past, what is wrong with having some other areas equally as large? Not that I said it was right, but if the people making the boundaries thought that was okay, to have a big area with one MLA, if that was okay, then why is it not okay to have some more? Now, there of course could be debate whether that original premise was satisfactory.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?
Thanks, Bruce.

MR. HINKLAY: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: I have one other presenter this evening, Ed Chubocka.

MR. CHUBOCKA: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and the committee, and thank you for allowing me to make this submission. Further to our letter of March 28, 1990, I would on behalf of the county of Leduc like to thank the committee for the opportunity to make this submission on the criteria for establishing provincial electoral boundaries.

In considering the alternative of establishing boundaries by population only, it is apparent that the larger urban centres would benefit at the expense of the less populated rural constituencies. How can this be justified, especially when you consider that the percentage share of the total population held by the largest cities, Calgary and Edmonton, has remained relatively stagnant since 1971 at 52 percent? Although the number of people represented by the urban MLAs will be higher than average, the workload may actually be less than that of the rural MLAs. In addition to the population, the workload of an MLA is determined by the number of municipal councils, school boards, hospital boards, recreation boards, service organizations, and the many other groups that must be adequately represented,

as well as the time in meeting with each. The rural MLA often has substantially more of such groups to represent than does his or her urban counterpart.

In determining criteria to establish electoral boundaries, the committee should as well consider establishing constituencies along trading boundaries or in line with the rural/municipal boundaries, where possible, to reduce confusion among the electors. Also, as population is a factor, the committee may wish to determine whether electoral population is more representative of the workload than total population.

In conclusion, we respectfully request the committee to consider such other factors as workload, electoral population, and the establishing of boundaries along trading areas when determining criteria to establish electoral boundaries. Please do not focus only on population; otherwise, in our view, adequate representation by rural MLAs would suffer. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, if I may, on the side, I attended a Soil and Water Conservation Society of America convention last year in Edmonton, where we had 900 delegates come, 700 from the United States and 200 from across Canada. In one session – it was on growth without losing ground – it was barely highlighted, what happens to the rural areas when they lose representation. It goes back to biblical days, where countries became broke, countries have been wiped out, civilization has been wiped out because they had no more voice. I guess in the very near future – we might not see it here, but in the long distance it could happen here, and I guess it is very important to me and to the county of Leduc that we do not repeat this history all over again. I have enough copies to give each committee member, and I strongly request that you read it. I think it'll more than add to what we are trying to say in our submission.

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

MR. CHUBOCKA: You're welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions from the panel for Ed? Anyone from the audience? Okay.

Thank you.

MR. CHUBOCKA: You're welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Don, as a host MLA, are there some comments you'd like to make?

MR. SPARROW: Yes. I'd like to thank both the counties of Wetaskiwin and Leduc and the chamber and Beaumont for making presentations. There is a concern, Mr. Chairman, that trading areas are very key. I've heard that concern numerous times, not just from the people present here. It's interesting to look at the statistics that were presented by the county of Wetaskiwin. When you look at the Alberta population in 1971 versus 1989, the cities of Calgary and Edmonton have stayed at 52 percent versus all the rest of the province at 48, so the shifting of population over that number of years has taken place in the smaller cities and towns. I represent two of those cities that have grown immensely over that time frame, and the town of Millet and the town of Beaumont have grown. So the growth has been shifting in what you'd call rural Alberta if you just took out the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. It's stayed pretty constant in comparison, and I think you should really consider that in your deliberations.

It's quite true that an urban MLA, and I've met a lot of them and talked to a lot of them, doesn't have near the workload that

a rural MLA does. We do have to work with quite a number of groups as rural MLAs and enjoy it. But, in comparison, having 16 or 17 MLAs in a major city dealing with one city council, two school boards, and that type of thing, we're a little bit envious when you look at what a rural MLA has to go through when we have two county councils, two city councils, two town councils, two hospital boards, six recreational boards, three FCSS boards, four library boards, four economic development boards, two BRZ boards, and four chambers, and on and on the list goes to some 132. So it's really the workload I want to impress on you, the workload of a rural MLA.

Even though I am the smallest rural area, as you said, Mr. Chairman, we do have a lot of organizations and groups that we represent. A lot of participation comes direct to the MLA versus the cities where they go direct to the departments. In my ministerial duties I find people in Edmonton and Calgary coming direct to us as ministers, and I think that's because we have massive service outlets for them in urban areas and very few outlets in rural Alberta. You can find that difference between, say, even Beaumont, which has no provincial government services whatsoever in their town. The city of Leduc has a few more. The city of Wetaskiwin, a little farther away, has a good provincial building here. Our provincial representation, our staff distributed throughout the province, do a good service job for urban Alberta and the major cities, and I think you've got to take that into consideration, because that's direct government services. The local MLA that's out in Chinook provides a lot of those services to every county and small town and village, and I think you should look at that too, because representation isn't the only thing. It's service that I think you have to really consider and the delivering of that government service, not only through the MLA but through government services spread throughout the province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Don.

Questions or comments from panel members? Anyone else on the MLA's remarks?

Okay. Before we have summation remarks from our panel members, is there anyone in the audience who would like to comment verbally at this time or add anything? Bruce.

MR. HINKLAY: Maybe just a question. What is the time line for a decision being made?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Once we complete the hearings, which is scheduled to be this Friday, we will officially have ended the hearing section of our work. That will mean we've had 39 hearings, nine of which were in Calgary and Edmonton, two in Red Deer, and two in Hanna, and then the other communities that were identified on the map we've been in once each. It's the most extensive hearing process, we believe, that the government through a special select committee has ever undertaken in the province. We will then sit down in September and presumably in early October, possibly late October, to complete our report. The report will be made public. The Legislature is committed to reconvene this fall and debate the report. Legislation is to be tabled, debated, and presumably passed, and a commission struck. So by the end of this calendar year a new commission will be in place ready to begin its work very early in 1991. Possibly, Pat, you could quickly lead us through the time lines for the commission's work.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The commission, of course, will be guided by the legislation. A couple of the key areas that will

determine the length will be the number of public hearings that are required prior to the commission drawing any lines. Once the commission has determined, after the public hearings, exactly where the lines are going to be drawn, then it will take them approximately two months to have the interim report prepared and distributed. There will also be a requirement for public hearings after the commission has made its recommendations. Again depending on the number of public hearings . . . So there are several factors.

One of the factors, of course, will be the number of commission members, and I think you were asked to have an input to that. You can appreciate that an increase in commission members is going to make it more difficult for that commission to meet for the public hearings and also harder to get consensus, so it's very difficult at this stage to even estimate the length of time. The time line that I as Chief Electoral Officer am interested in is that by March of 1992 I would like to have the new boundaries in place so that we can have the returning officers appointed for the new electoral divisions and the maps drawn, so that on June 1, when the returning officers go out to the constituency associations to ask for enumerators for the enumeration in the fall of 1992, they have the polling subdivision maps so the constituency associations can nominate enumerators for specific polling subdivisions, as they do now. Very difficult. Until we find out what the redistribution rules are, the composition of the commission, and requirements for public hearings, I would not be prepared to give an estimate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right?

MR. HINKLAY: Yes, that's fine. In the unlikely case that there should be another election before that, what would happen?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It would be on the old boundaries. What else could you do? I don't think there's a member on this panel who believes that that's going to happen. We are still early in a five-year mandate, and we believe that by getting our report in this fall, by the Legislature acting on it this fall and appointing the commission, even with the requirement for some hearings prior to the commission developing its interim report - and that was a request that came out at a number of locations. But I think the key there is that we not load the commission down with 39 hearings across the province. I mean, that would be crazy.

The other key point that Pat made was that the number of commissioners is a factor. The greater the number, the greater the workload, the greater the involvement. Trying to get consensus can become harder, particularly if one member misses a number of meetings and isn't really up to speed with the others.

Any other questions or comments before we conclude?

MR. DeVRIES: I would like to ask a question: Is there any rule of law that governs the number of MLAs a particular province can have?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. They vary. We're all over the map. We've looked at statistics to see the number of constituents per MLA in comparisons. There's no rule that governs what the prescribed number should be, but as was pointed out by at least two of the six presenters tonight, the message has been consistent across the province: don't create more seats. Now, a couple of presenters have said, "Add more seats to solve the

problem," but the vast majority of people who have come forward have said, "Don't add more seats."

MR. DeVRIES: I say the same: do not add any more seats, because Alberta at the present time is governed by enough people already.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You say that it's at least 95 percent consensus?

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: From what we've heard.

Last call. Does anyone else have a point they'd like to make? Yes, sir.

MR. CHUBOCKA: Mr. Chairman, I've spoken to quite a few rural residents and also to smaller urban centres within our constituency, and I never perceived or heard anyone making a comment or making presentations through their submissions that it's rural versus urban. We all feel that we all need each other to live in this country, and I guess what the rurals are trying to do is make the submission that we're equally important to make this province work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Ed. One or two presenters have suggested to us and you heard at least one committee member tonight say: "Maybe we should find terms other than urban and rural. Let's get away from those terms which seem to divide us; let's find terms that don't do that."

Yes?

MRS. BOLTON: Our constituency is unique in taking a few of us off and putting us in Ponoka-Rimbey. I would like to ask: do you not think that where we spend our dollar should be our voting centre?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did everyone hear the question? Basically it was: do you not think that where we spend our dollar is where we should vote?

MRS. BOLTON: In this instance I say that it's unique because the reserve separates us from Ponoka.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I would say that one of the strongest messages to come through tonight at this hearing is the point that trading areas should be a factor in determining boundaries. That message has come through stronger tonight than it has in any of our other hearings, so obviously there are concerns in this area. We've heard others. There have been unique circumstances; if we go into a particular area, they've concentrated on one thing. I think your point is well taken. It started off with Frank talking about the problems of the federal riding of Elk Island, and I know that Pat's listening carefully.

One of the advantages of having Pat Ledgerwood sit on our committee is that regardless of the makeup of the commission, you can be almost guaranteed that Mr. Ledgerwood will be sitting on the commission as the Chief Electoral Officer of the province. He has heard a concern similar to that in other areas, so we've tried to find a way to ensure that that information is passed on to the commission. What better way to do it than through one of our members who will be sitting on the commission.

So we thank you for that concern. That's one of the very reasons it's been recommended that there be some hearings before the commission sits down to write an interim report: so that they can hear from people who are concerned about being divided physically from their trading area by something else. In your case, you say that it's an Indian reserve, Hobbema Four Bands.

MRS. BOLTON: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. BOLTON: And there would have been more here to represent the region if it hadn't been harvest.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. We apologize for the time of year. As you know, we were initially scheduled to be here in June. The Legislature ran into early July. We were forced to postpone all of our meetings in June and come back. We know that it's a poor time of year for you. I don't think the committee members are really excited about being away from their families either. We did feel it important to get back and fulfill the commitment and hear you.

MRS. BOLTON: I only see two here representing those that have taken off early.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you've spoken for them, and we appreciate that.

MRS. BOLTON: I hope I have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have.

MRS. BOLTON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Okay. In summation, Pam, would you like to begin, please?

MS BARRETT: Thanks for taking the time. As Bob said, it's a real riot coming out on a hot summer night, knowing that autumn is around the corner and sitting in a meeting room and listening to this sort of stuff, especially considering that we can't even tell you what's going to be in the report yet, but we can tell you that you will get a copy of the report, that legislation will follow. I have little doubt that there will always be at least one or two elements of some controversy. Probably you will get a copy of the draft legislation when we send out to you our report. It will probably be in there, although not necessarily.

In any event, this being a good, healthy democratic society, you should also keep in mind that you have the power long before the commission is struck to contact us in writing or by phone and to let us know what you think of the report as well or maybe even, if you want, to suggest certain amendments to the draft legislation. So it's a long process, but I for one am hopeful that it's worth while, and I appreciate you folks taking the time to be here, too, to help make it worth while.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Pam.
Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I guess I want to echo Bob's comment a bit. You know, we've heard most of the presentations, some of the

concerns you have, brought forward. One new area, of course, is the trading area, and that's very, very important. We haven't heard that very much. Looking at all the presentations here, basically what I hear is for us to look at developing a system that will provide a good quality of life for all Albertans regardless of where you live, which means, I guess, that when you draw up the lines, you take a lot of things into consideration other than just population.

A concern was brought up by the last presenter about the problems of urban growth, and it is a problem for all Albertans because when cities get too large, there are problems with garbage - right now in Edmonton, as an example - and with the amount of vehicles driven. Edmonton has around 380,000 motorized vehicles; Calgary has 460,000 motorized vehicles. Those are some of things that I think we need to look at together as Albertans, because I think we can probably plan our province a lot better than what it's been planned in the past. We have the technology, we have the experience, and I think we should plan our province. Economic growth tends to determine where the growth goes. Calgary and Edmonton have managed to promote the economy; therefore, the two centres grow. But the resources they utilize to attract that economic growth come from rural Alberta. So I think we can plan it a lot better. It's a matter of us all working together.

With that, I'd like to thank you again for your presentations. We'll try our darnedest to do a good job for all Albertans.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Mike.
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'd just like to thank everybody for coming out on a hot evening. I agree with the fellow at the back who's sitting there fanning himself: it's pretty warm in here tonight. It is a warm evening to be here.

I think one of the things we need to do, though, is maybe get rid of the labels and just worry about what's good representation for Albertans. To that effect, I think our committee is in agreement that we will work to do the best we can. Hopefully it will satisfy all of your needs as best is possible, recognizing that compromise is going to have to be made between north and south, east and west, cities and not cities or whatever you want to call it. We're committed to doing a good job, and hopefully you'll be pleased with the results that come out, whatever they are.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.
Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to acknowledge the excellent presentations that were made. The research that was done by some of the presenters was first-class and shows that you really have an interest in it. I would point out to the county of Wetaskiwin, as Mike pointed out, that there have been some significant increases in Edmonton and Calgary. Since the 1989 census Calgary has increased by 21,000 people and Edmonton has increased by 22,000 people. As the MLA for this area pointed out, growth has not been even through the province, and that's something that I'm sure the committee will recognize when they provide the rules for the commission to look at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Pat.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'll try and be brief. I'm not very good at being brief sometimes, but I know you'll call me to order, Mr. Chairman.

I, too, want to thank you for coming out. It used to be pretty easy: in the last commission that I had the opportunity to provide some information to, the legislation was there; the numbers were very clear. Subsequent to that, we've had a Charter of Rights, which has given us a whole new series of rules and some that we're not even sure whether or not we're going to be able to conform with. That's the reason that this committee is going out and hearing from all Albertans.

One of the things that has really been amazing is that in every group that we've hosted, every town that we've gone to, every city that we've gone to, almost every presenter has said, "We're different." It doesn't matter if they're from a rural part of the country, if they're from a small town, or if they're from a large urban centre such as Edmonton or Calgary, they have almost always said, "We're different and we need certain representation." I guess the point I want to try and leave with you is that having served as an executive assistant to a rural MLA at one time, I know there were the problems of the many groups that you have to deal with: the MDs, the IDs, the library boards, the hospital boards. The amazing thing I get a little bit of appreciation for now is that when I worked for Grant, if people had a complaint about a hospital board, sometimes they went to the hospital administrator first, and if they had a complaint about the way the road was graded or that it wasn't plowed in the winter, they went to the person that was responsible for the plowing or the grading, and then they went to the MLA if it didn't work out there.

As an urban MLA I guess that because we get a little more notoriety than sometimes the aldermen and the hospital boards and the library boards do, what happens is that people pick up the phone and when you're representing 22,000 people, they say: I know that guy or that woman, and I'm going to call them. They call us first before they return to the hospital board or the library board. Sometimes I sort of wish that we had that buffer of 162 organizations between myself and some of the people that I have the pleasure of representing.

So there are those differences, and I guess that's the underlying theme of all of this in Alberta: through all of these differen-

ces we're all pretty much trying to deliver the same messages; we all have certain needs that have to be looked after. We're going to try and do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom.
Don.

MR. SPARROW: That's fine, Bob. I think it's nice to have you in Wetaskiwin. It's interesting listening to the process, and I think you've handled yourselves as a commission very, very well, especially in my community; I don't know what you've done elsewhere. I'm looking forward to your report and good luck.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much. Normally I sum up by highlighting the key points that each of the presenters has made, but these panel members are getting so sharp that they're taking my ideas; they're taking your ideas as they go through them. I believe that all of the key points have been covered.

I'd just like to put emphasis on a couple of points. Your request that we give consideration to more than population, that there are other factors that need to be taken into account, was heard by all of us. I think we all understand the principle of representation by population and understand that population is a very important factor and must remain a very important factor but that there are other factors which come into account as well. Again, my response to you, dear lady, for the kind way you've pointed out your concern about being split off from your trading area: I don't think that could have been given any better or in a more sensitive way by a written brief. You've said it and said it well, and for that we thank you.

We do thank you for coming out. This is not an easy job, as you well know. It's a damn tough job, but you're making our job a little easier in helping us with some ideas. Really these meetings are twofold. We're here to share with you some of the thoughts and ideas we have, but we're also here to gain from you your thoughts, your ideas on how we can solve the problem. In each and every meeting we've picked up some new ideas; tonight's no exception. Thanks very much for coming out and being with us.

[The committee adjourned at 8:45 p.m.]