

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[7:02 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Mrs. Wilson and gentlemen, I'm pleased to declare the select special committee meeting on electoral boundaries being held here in Rockyford officially open. The purpose of the meeting is to share with you thoughts and ideas that the committee has on the electoral boundaries process in the province and, more importantly, to gain input from you. In a moment I'm going to introduce the members of the committee who are with us this evening, but I want to say at the outset how pleased we are that you've come. The meeting was originally scheduled for late June, and we were forced to reschedule the meeting to late August because of the extended sitting of our own Legislature. We ran into early July, as you are probably aware. That has caused the attendance at our meetings to be a little lighter than would otherwise be the case.

It's my understanding that we may not have any formal briefs to be presented this evening. That doesn't deter us as a committee at all in that we have some information to share with you. I will ask two of the panel members to do that, and once that's been done, we'll attempt to have a general discussion. The one thing I would ask is that we keep our points on the matter of electoral boundaries, because that's really the mandate the committee has and that's the purpose of the group assembled.

I'm now going to introduce the members of the committee who are with us today. Starting on my immediate left is Pam Barrett. Pam is a New Democratic member of the Assembly.

MR. McELROY: Cheers for Pam.

MS BARRETT: All right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam represents the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands. This is her second term in the Assembly in Alberta, and she has, in addition to her many duties in her constituency, the task of being the House leader for her party.

Next to Pam is Frank Bruseker. Frank is a Liberal member of the Assembly and represents the constituency of Calgary-North West. This is Frank's first term in the Assembly. As his wife is from the Manyberries area in southeastern Alberta, while Frank has lived in the city all his life, he certainly – and I know this from the discussions we've had traveling to and from various meetings – has an appreciation for rural Alberta through his family members who are farming in that particular area.

Next to Frank, of course, is a man who needs no introduction in this area, your own Member of the Legislative Assembly, Stan Schumacher. We're delighted to have Stan with us as a host MLA. It's been our custom throughout the province to invite the local MLA to be with us, and if there are some wrap-up comments that he wishes to make at the end in addition to the participation he has with you during the process, that would certainly be welcome and appreciated.

On my immediate right, and I'm not sure I'm speaking philosophically, but at least . . .

MS BARRETT: I'm sure you are.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . in physical presence at this time, Pam's very good friend, Pat Black. Pat is a Progressive Conservative member of the Assembly and represents the constituency of Calgary-Foothills. Now, the other day I mixed up Calgary-Foothills and Calgary-North West between Frank and Pat, and was I in trouble. Anyway, this is Pat's first term in the Assemb-

ly. She's a chartered accountant by profession and certainly no stranger to rural Alberta, having worked in the oil patch for some time.

Next is Tom Sigurdson. Tom is a New Democratic member of the Assembly. This is the second term for Tom. He represents the constituency of Edmonton-Belmont. He served as the executive assistant to the late Grant Notley and in that capacity got to know not only the old Spirit River-Fairview constituency, which is now called Dunvegan, but other parts of the province. In addition, Mr. Notley served on a previous Electoral Boundaries Commission, so Tom did have an inkling or some insight into that process.

You'll note on our letterhead that the official makeup of the committee consists of members of the Assembly. While Pat Ledgerwood is not a member of the Assembly, he is one of the three officers who report directly to the Assembly. He is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta, and our committee unanimously felt that our knowledge base would be strengthened significantly if we could persuade Mr. Ledgerwood to join us. Not only does he have extensive background on the Alberta election scene; he served on the federal election redistribution commission, so he's got extensive knowledge in this area, and we're really pleased to have Pat with us.

My name is Bob Bogle. I'm the MLA for the Taber-Warner constituency, and I am a Progressive Conservative.

There are a couple of staff members with us tonight that I'd like to introduce. First of all, there's Bob Pritchard. Bob is the senior administrator for our staff, and if any of you have phoned in or written letters, in all likelihood Bob is the person you spoke with. The person who does most of the work in the office though, as we all know, is Ted Edwards, at the back of the room. I wasn't supposed to say that, Bob, was I? It'll cost me later in some way.

MR. PRITCHARD: No. Now you've embarrassed me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In any event, we're delighted to have Ted with us as well, and we have Doug and Paula with us from *Hansard*. They are the people who are recording all of the proceedings; that's why we have the microphones present. This meeting is being taped and recorded, as were all of our previous meetings. This is meeting 38 in the series. We believe, from very cursory examination, that this is the most extensive hearings process that the Legislative Assembly in Alberta has ever undertaken on a matter which affects the electors in our province, and we know how important it is. So if any of you would like a copy of the transcript after the meeting, you're entitled to it or of any of the other hearings that we've held across the province.

I'm going to ask Pat Ledgerwood if he would give us a brief description of the court case in British Columbia which really led up to the creation of our committee, an all-party committee, in the Alberta Assembly. Once that's been done, I think we'd agreed, Frank, that you're taking us through the slide presentation tonight.

Okay. Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, normally at this point instead of a committee traveling in the province, it would be a commission, in that there is a requirement for a review of the electoral boundaries after every second general election. The last time we did this redistribution was in 1983-84, and those boundaries were effective for the 1986 general election and the 1989 general

election. However, as the chairman has indicated, because of a B.C. decision in their superior court, this committee was formed to travel throughout Alberta and get input from Albertans.

The situation in British Columbia. They had a variance in the size of their electoral divisions. The smallest had a population of just over 5,500; the largest had a population of over 68,000. So the British Columbia government had a commission headed by a Justice Fisher, who reviewed the situation. He was appointed in April of 1987 and completed his report in December of 1988.

Three main points out of his report: that they eliminate the dual-member ridings in British Columbia - doesn't affect us; that they increase the number of MLAs from 69 to 75 - doesn't affect us; but what he said was that there should be equal votes by all electors. He based that on the Charter and also from checking with other jurisdictions. So they took the population of British Columbia, divided it by 75, established an average, and then said that all electoral divisions must be within plus or minus 25 percent of that average.

The government really didn't react to this, so a Professor Dixon and some of his colleagues took the government to court. The case was heard before Madam Chief Justice McLachlin, and she determined that the parameters established by the Fisher commission were reasonable; that is, an average, and they all fall within plus or minus 25 percent of the mean. There was no appeal to this particular decision. In the meantime, Justice McLachlin has been elevated to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The government still didn't react quickly enough in the eyes of Professor Dixon and his colleagues, so they again went to court and the case was heard before a Justice Meredith. What Dixon was basically saying was that if the situation in British Columbia is so far off the Charter, then the courts should be doing something about establishing the criteria laid down by the Fisher commission. Justice Meredith ruled that the courts were not established to govern, that they were not a government, and that they could not dissolve the Legislature and have the courts act as government.

The British Columbia government reacted to this and established a commission in 1989. The commission only made minor changes to the Fisher commission report and established the new boundaries. These new boundaries came into effect in January of this year, so the next election in British Columbia will be fought on the new boundaries and the populations will all be within plus or minus 25 percent of the mean.

That is basically the situation which created this particular committee, in that in Alberta we'd used a plus or minus 25 percent but only for urban ridings; there was no minimum or maximum for rural ridings. And as you'll find out later on during the briefing by Mr. Bruseker, 43 of our electoral divisions fail to meet that plus or minus 25 percent criteria.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Pat.

Any questions of Pat on his overview regarding the British Columbia court case?

Okay. Frank, will you go on with the slide presentation, please.

MR. BRUSEKER: When you came in the door, you probably picked up a package of information, or maybe you've seen it before. The slides that we have to show you go through the package of information, but we also have some additional slides that are not included in this particular package. I'll go through it including, first of all, what you have before you.

The first transparency is page 3 in your package, and what that page shows simply is a list, alphabetically, of the 83 constituencies we have in the province of Alberta right now. This next list is not exactly duplicated in your package. It shows the 83 constituencies not in alphabetical order but rather in an order showing population or the eligible voters in the constituency. The largest constituency by eligible voters is that of Edmonton-Whitemud, with 31,500 voters. The smallest constituency is Cardston, in the southern part of the province, with 8,100. Cardston is a bit unusual, however, in that there are some 1,800 members of the Blood Indian tribe that are on a reservation that chose not to be enumerated and should actually be added to that 8,100 figure.

If you totaled all of those numbers together, you would get a total population for the entire province of just over one and a half million electors. If you divide that by the 83 constituencies that we have in the province, you would get an average figure of 18,600 electors per constituency. If we then applied that plus or minus 25 percent variation that Mr. Ledgerwood spoke of, you would get an upper-end constituency as being just over 23,000, at 23,300. That would be the plus 25 percent. The minus 25 percent would be a low end of just over 14,000 electors per constituency.

If you look at the list we have, the constituencies which are highlighted in green are those constituencies that are more than plus 25 percent away from the mean; in other words, more than 23,300 electors per constituency. You can see those highlighted there. They are all what we consider to be urban constituencies, primarily Edmonton and Calgary, but St. Albert and Medicine Hat are also included. The ones that are in pink are those that are more than 25 percent below the average; in other words, less than 14,000. All of those are rural constituencies.

Showing it on the map of the province of Alberta, the pink colour - primarily you see pink there. There are two small green dots, one dot representing the city of St. Albert and one dot representing the city of Medicine Hat. Primarily what you see there, of course, are the pink-coloured constituencies representing, again, minus 25 percent; in other words, 14,000 electors or more. You can see that it goes from north to south, east to west, right across the province.

This map is the city of Calgary. The green colour indicates those constituencies that are more than 25 percent above the average. On this one and the next one, which is Edmonton, you can see that it's around the perimeter of the city, where it is growing and expanding outwards, that we have those constituencies which are exceeding that plus 25 percent guideline that has been laid down in the province of British Columbia.

Currently the city of Lethbridge is divided into two constituencies: Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. You can see on this particular transparency that they are uncoloured, indicating that they are currently within the acceptable range of plus or minus 25 percent.

The city of Medicine Hat. You'll see a number of lines there; those are the polling stations within the city of Medicine Hat. I'm not sure if this one is in your package; I think this one was omitted. This is one constituency, and currently Medicine Hat is, I believe, the fourth largest constituency in the province, exceeding the 25 percent guideline.

At the time of the last electoral redistribution, which occurred in '83-84, Red Deer city was one constituency, but it was too large at that time to be considered to remain as one constituency. It needed to be divided in two, but there wasn't sufficient population to justify two constituencies. On this particular transparency you see both black and brown lines. The brown

line represents the current Red Deer city limits. The black lines represent the provincial electoral constituencies which we have. The solution the commission came up with at that time was to take Red Deer and divide it into two constituencies, north and south, using the river as a dividing line, and then also to take some of the outlying rural countryside, mostly acreages, and add that to those two constituencies in order to get sufficient numbers to justify two constituencies. So that's what happened in that particular area.

This is the city of St. Albert, located just to the northwest of Edmonton, and it is again one constituency and again exceeds that plus 25 percent.

When we looked at some of the constituencies, particularly the rural constituencies, we noticed that some of them were quite small. There are some urban ones that are quite large; there are some rural ones that are quite small. The purple colour that you see here on this particular transparency shows 16 constituencies which are more than 35 percent – not 25 but 35 percent – below the average; in other words, 12,000 electors per constituency or less.

This last transparency shows you five constituencies coloured in yellow, and I believe it's the last page in your package that you have before you. The yellow colour indicates those constituencies that are more than 50 percent away from the average; in other words, 10,000 electors or less.

Oh, sorry; this is the last page. You can see the additional hearings we have scheduled. We are in Rockyford second to last. We are going to Wainwright tomorrow, which will be hearing 39, and then the hearing process will be completed. Then our committee will be meeting in Edmonton to try to assimilate all of this information, make sense of it, and write a report that hopefully other people can understand as well.

Now, on this particular transparency the blue dots show you where we have been, with one dot on there for Wainwright, where we are going tomorrow.

The next transparency shows you an overlay of – the purple colour, you will recall, was those constituencies that are more than 35 percent below the average. The green dots show you where we've been, and you can see that we've really tried to make an effort to get into those areas that are most likely going to be affected by any revisions that do occur.

Now, very early on in the process – and here's where we deviate from the package you have before you – one of the questions that was raised, and I believe it was raised by Tom Sigurdson, was: "What about in other provinces? They used the total population." British Columbia decided, when they were going to revamp, not to use just electors but include the total population. The rationale for that is simply this. When someone becomes elected as an MLA, they represent the people that voted for them; they also represent the people that did not vote for them, maybe voted for another candidate, but we also represent the under 18-year-olds, the people that don't yet have the right to vote, the children and students. We also represent the landed immigrants, the non-Canadians that have come here and chosen to settle in our particular area. Also, in certain constituencies there are situations like the Blood Indians in Cardston that chose not to be enumerated. Even though they chose not to be enumerated, the MLA for that area still represents those individuals. So if you choose to use entire population, you include everybody, and it has some interesting results, which we are going to go through in just a moment.

If you look at the bottom half of this particular transparency, the total population of the province is currently – and this is using 1986 census data, so it's four years old and therefore there

is some margin of error there, but it's the most recent we have – approximately 2.4 million people. If we then take the 83 constituencies that we currently have, divide the 2.4 million by the 83 constituencies, you then get an average figure using total population of 28,500. If we then use that plus or minus 25 percent variation, like happened in British Columbia, you would get an upper end – the plus 25 percent would be about 35,600. The minus 25 percent would be a low end of about 21,300. Remember, these are using population.

So now what we're going to do is go through a series of slides similar to what we went through before. In this one, again the green shows you plus 25 percent; in other words, more than 35,000 total population. The pink shows you the minus 25 percent; in other words, less than 21,000 total population. The interesting thing here is that before, we had 40 constituencies that were within the plus or minus 25 percent range; now we have 43 constituencies. So there are more that fall within the acceptable plus or minus 25 percent. It starts to show up dramatically when we look at maps of Alberta. Again the pink colour shows those constituencies that are more than 25 percent below the average, and again you can see there are quite a number there. But notice this time that we have two rural constituencies that are more than plus 25 percent, and those are the constituency of Grande Prairie on the west side of the province and the constituency of Fort McMurray in the northeast corner of the province.

This is again the city of Calgary. We still have some that are coloured in green, and you can see again that those are the constituencies around the edges of the city. This particular map, though, has seven constituencies coloured in green. The first one that I showed you like this for the city of Calgary had nine. So we've reduced by two.

Now, the next one is a map of the city of Edmonton; again some still coloured in green. This one has seven on it. The first one we showed you, using electors instead of population, had eight. So we've reduced by one within the city of Edmonton.

This one is quite dramatic. When you look at this particular map, you can see again that the purple colour indicates those constituencies that are more than 35 percent away from the average. On this particular transparency there are 12 constituencies coloured in purple. When we used electors, there were 16 constituencies coloured in purple. So quite a significant change here, and really dramatic on the minus 50 percent. You will recall when we used the electors, we had five. Now when we use total population, we have only one constituency, that being Pincher Creek-Crowsnest in the southwest corner, which is more than 50 percent below the average.

Before we really got into the hearings process, we also traveled with our committee to the other western provinces – Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia – to find out what is occurring and has occurred in those particular provinces. Mr. Ledgerwood has referred to what's happened in British Columbia. Similar processes have also been applied, with some variation, in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We've had to date – well, to date this is hearing 38. You can see the list there. We had several hearings in Edmonton and Calgary, two in Red Deer because of demand there, two in Hanna because of the demand we had there, and one in each of the other locations. Up until now we've well exceeded 700 in terms of number of people attending these kinds of hearings around the province. We've exceeded the 300 mark in terms of total number of people making an oral presentation to our committee, and I imagine we're up to about 150 now in terms of people who have written a submission and simply mailed one in to us.

So that's the last transparency. Are there any questions about any of that that I went through? If not, I'll turn it back to Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank. Any questions, again, on the process up to this point?

MR. RAMSBOTTOM: It's to do with the B.C. number, and that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. Could we begin by asking everyone to identify themselves for *Hansard*?

MR. RAMSBOTTOM: Jim Ramsbottom, Drumheller.

When you were talking earlier – I might have missed it – when you talked about the process through the court of B.C., did that go right to the Supreme Court?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it did not. British Columbia did not appeal it. We think that's unfortunate, but it was not appealed. It's also important to recognize, as was pointed out by Mr. Ledgerwood, that Madam Justice McLachlin is now a member of the Supreme Court of Canada. But no, it was not appealed.

MS BARRETT: Perhaps we should add for information, though, that Saskatchewan now observes the plus or minus 25 percent rule. Manitoba, with the exception of a couple of very large, remote, sparsely populated ridings, took the rule to 10 percent, and the federal government, with a few exceptions, has for some years now observed the 25 plus or minus percent rule. So it may not have been ultimately challenged in British Columbia, but because of the original position of the federal government and then the consequent challenge, it would appear that it's close to becoming at least a norm.

MR. RAMSBOTTOM: And in those areas in the places you quoted, was that on the voters, or on the total population in all cases?

MS BARRETT: I think it's mainly the total population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Primarily total population. Pat, would you like to elaborate on that?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: In about one minute.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Pat's got all the statistics on it.

MS BARRETT: I know federally it's based on population.

MR. SIGURDSON: And in British Columbia.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. But as Frank had earlier mentioned, it was suggested at some of our very early hearings that we look at using the total population rather than just the elector population, and that's something that Tom has supported right from the beginning. Of course, you saw the dramatic impact it had on ridings like Cardston, with the Blood Indian Band.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Chairman, when we were talking about the variances, 25 percent seems to be the most popular. Ms Barrett mentioned Manitoba at 10 percent, but I think it also should be pointed out that for many, many years now Nova Scotia has had 30 percent without any complaint from anybody.

MS BARRETT: Oh, is that right? I didn't know that. Thirty percent, eh?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Mr. Chairman, in Manitoba it's population; in Saskatchewan, electors; and as I mentioned, in British Columbia, population. I should also mention that in Saskatchewan, although they use the plus or minus 25 percent rule, they are still going to go to court because there are some individuals in Saskatchewan who feel that because the commission had all the rural ridings very close to the minus 25 percent and all the urban ridings very close to the plus 25 percent, there's not an equal distribution between urban and rural areas. Hopefully, that court case will be heard next month. They're actually going to ask the court to rule on two questions. The first question is: is the plus or minus 25 percent a reasonable variation? Secondly, is the split in Saskatchewan of rural and urban – and they have two separate northern ridings – reasonable under the Charter? So you may want to watch for that court case, which, as I mentioned, hopefully will come up next month in Regina.

MR. RAMSBOTTOM: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions other than Jim's, then, for clarification or further elaboration? That's why we're here. Don't be shy about asking if there's something we went over too quickly or you'd like a little more detail on.

All right. I might ask at this point then: while we have no formal briefs that I'm aware of to be presented this evening, are there any of you who would like to ask a question of the committee, or is there a comment you'd like to make relative to electoral boundaries?

MR. KATTERHAGEN: What is our provincial government in favour of doing?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the reason that the three parties in Alberta appointed this committee – and it's a committee made up of all three parties – was that we were given a specific task, to look at some questions, and the questions are contained in your document. We were asked to look at the implications of the Charter of Rights on the Alberta situation.

You see, traditionally in Alberta we've followed the premise that we've given a greater weighting to rural ridings. We've gone along the general rule of thumb that seven urban voters equate to four rural voters, and that was to take into account geography and distance and that sort of thing. That has not been challenged to date. However, we all realize that with the Charter of Rights now part of our Constitution, and we see the implications of the Charter in the British Columbia situation even though that has no direct bearing on us, I think all of us at the table believe that if we continued on without addressing the issue – we haven't sat down as a committee to try to formulate our ideas or anything like that; we wanted to finish the hearing process first – if we didn't at least address it and come up with a formula that we believed would satisfy the test of the Charter, be a made-in-Alberta solution, we wouldn't really be carrying out our responsibilities.

So the government per se has not said to do this or do that, but the governing party along with the two opposition parties has said: "This is a serious matter. Let's strike an all-party committee. Let's work on it and see if we can't come up with a reasonable set of recommendations." Our task, after completing the hearing process tomorrow, is to spend time this fall

trying to develop a set of recommendations – ideally, that are recommended unanimously – back to the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly has committed to sit this fall, so we will be dealing as a Legislature with the recommendations of this committee – presumably with some legislation then, because in order to bring about the changes, we have to bring in legislation – and we'll strike an Electoral Boundaries Commission. That is the body that would actually go out and draw the lines, the lines between the Drumheller constituency and Three Hills, for instance. Then the whole process will start again in the sense of drawing the lines. But our committee is trying to develop the parameters which we hope will be approved by the Assembly and then given to the boundaries commission.

Did I respond to your question? I gave you quite a bit.

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Yes, you did in a way, but what I really want to know is – because the rural haven't really much say anyway with the way we stand. It's just . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why would you say that, sir? At the current time we have . . .

MR. KATTERHAGEN: If you expand the cities, we'll be giving more say to the cities. There'll be less said out here in the country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the reasons we've been traveling across the province, and the majority of our hearings have been in the country, is to get input from people. So you're saying to us that you're concerned about what happens to rural ridings, and that's a fair observation for you to make. Keep in mind – and other members get in on this; I don't want to be the only one speaking – at the present time we have 42 urban seats; we have 41 rural. Now, it hasn't been like that since 1905. We started out in 1905 with a much greater proportion of the ridings rural, but over time and with the growth of our urban centres, there's been a slow coming together of the lines. So on a total numbers basis, in the last redistribution we actually saw for the first time in the province's history more urban seats than rural seats.

What we've been hearing in a lot of our hearings is, "If you were to take away 10 rural seats and add 10 seats to the urban centres, that would be the most dramatic shift that's ever occurred, and that's something we're very fearful of." Now, other committee members get in when you like, because I'm merely trying to respond to your question based on some of the information we've previously heard.

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Well, that's what we'd be afraid of too, if 10 more went to urban.

MS BARRETT: But, for instance, if currently you've got 60 percent of the population in metropolitan communities and 40 percent in rural communities and you've got about a 50-50 split in representation, do you have any view at what point you would say, "Yes, we need to adjust so that the major metropolitan dwellers would have more representation"?

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Well, I think if you increase it by 10, that would be a really dramatic chunk. There are about six that are really over – there's Edmonton-Whitemud and that. Break them down, and maybe give the cities maybe three or four or nine or 10. Just make them smaller, add another in there, but never take away from the rural.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. I'm sorry; did you introduce yourself at the beginning?

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Terry Katterhagen from Rockyford.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Terry. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Can I ask one more question of you and of other people? If there are no formal presentations, maybe we can just have a discussion.

If you were to do that, are you suggesting, then, that you would reduce the rural ridings, or are you saying that you would add to the total number of seats in the House?

MR. KATTERHAGEN: No. I'd add to the total number of seats in the House. Don't take away from the rural, because otherwise we'd have less say than what we have now.

MS WISE: Yeah, but you're still decreasing the rural number of representation.

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Okay. Increase the urban ones . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pardon me; one at a time. And please introduce yourself first.

MS WISE: Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's all right. I think it's good that we have a round table discussion. Once you've introduced yourself, *Hansard* know who you are, so you don't have to do it again. But we need your names the first time.

MS WISE: My name's Pat.

Even if you keep the rural ridings the same and you increase the total number of ridings, you're still by percentage decreasing the rural representation no matter what you work out to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir, and then the gentleman.

MR. ROPPEL: Howard Roppel, Rockyford.

Yes, I think what Pat said is rather self-evident. My question is: are there a lot of rumblings of discontent when the urban ridings such as Edmonton-Whitemud – are they feeling very underrepresented?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Howard, can we hold that question? I think Mr. Wilson wanted to supplement on this other point, and then we'll come back to you.

MR. WILSON: I had a different point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Then we'll hold you too. Now back to Howard.

The question is: are there rumblings, is there discontent? Would anyone else like to respond? Go ahead, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, to some degree, yes, there is. When you've got, for example, the three constituencies in the southwest corner – MacLeod, Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, and Cardston – and you put those populations together and they add up to less than 30,000, which equals the population of an Edmonton-Whitemud, and you consider that on matters that affect the province, those 30,000 people have three representatives in the

Legislative Assembly and the 30,000 people that live in Edmonton-Whitemud have one person that represents them in the Legislature, it puts a bit of an imbalance there. So when certain matters go before the Legislative Assembly, some people have three times the weight. Their vote carries three times the weight, and that's perceived as a problem in the urban centres.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Go ahead, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Yes. Just to interject a little bit further. As Pat Ledgerwood explained in his opening remarks, our current legislation insists that we have a review of our electoral boundaries after every second election. This review was not something that was instigated by an urban or a rural setting; it's through our own legislation that we have to do this review. In doing that, we looked at the current situation in other jurisdictions so that we could put forward recommendations that would be in accordance with our Constitution, the Canadian Charter of Rights, because we don't want to go through Charter challenges down the road. So all of those factors combined. It wasn't really a riding or a group of ridings that brought this to bear. It was the fact that our own legislation dictates that we must have a review after every second election. That's how it came about.

MR. ROPPEL: If all the ridings were exactly equal, it would be roughly true, wouldn't it, that metropolitan Edmonton would have one-third, metropolitan Calgary would have one-third, and the other third would be the rest of the province?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I want to respond to that. No, I think if you are looking at the two cities, they're just around 50, 51 percent of the total population. But please keep in mind an important factor. We've had some presenters suggest to us that we should look at the American model, where there's one person, one vote. And I'll use the state of Montana. There are two members of the House of Representatives, and the districts divide the state almost evenly in half. There are just a few more voters in one than the other, and that's a very precise form of developing the system. But we must never forget that in the United States there's a bicameral House; in other words, two Chambers. There's the lower House. I've just described the House of Representatives, where California has - what, Pat? - 45, 48 representatives; Montana has two. But in the upper House, in the Senate, each state has two Senators, whether it's Montana with 600,000 people or California with 22 million. So there's a balance.

Even in Canada at the national level, even though we may be arguing for what we call a Triple E Senate, the existing Senate was based on the concept of regional equality, where each region was given 24 Senators, starting with the maritimes and with Quebec and with Ontario. Then when the west was added, again 24 more Senators. The lower House is rep by pop. Well, we don't have that in Alberta; we've got one House. So historically there's been a balance in Alberta, and that's, I believe, one of the reasons we wound up with the seven urban voters equating to four rural voters concept, so that you're mixing the two: you're mixing rep by pop with kind of the regional interests.

The concern now, and it's been expressed I think to every member in this committee and to many others in our Assembly, is that that probably in itself would not withstand a Charter of Rights challenge. Again people are looking back to the case in British Columbia and are concerned that our current legislation,

if we were to go with it as is, would in all likelihood not withstand a Charter challenge. So one of the things we have to decide is: are we comfortable as a committee that that is so, and if we are collectively, then what are we recommending? What are we recommending that recognizes the concerns that you're expressing here tonight - and they're not dissimilar to concerns that have been expressed in other parts of the province - while at the same time recognizing some concerns out of urban centres? Tom gave you the statistics for Edmonton-Whitemud. The only thing I'd say on that is: remember that if it were not for the fact that there was the Charter challenge in British Columbia, we'd have a commission struck right now that would be redrawing our boundaries, because we do that after every second general election in the province. So you need to go back, really, and look at the statistics of Edmonton-Whitemud's population when the last redistribution occurred.

Yes, ma'am. Oh, sorry. Okay, on this first, and then we'll go back.

MR. SIGURDSON: Edmonton and Calgary - Pat just did a quick calculation - constitute about 52 percent of the total population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Fifty-two.
On this point? Yes.

MISS YOLLAND: Diane Yolland from Rockyford.

What I was wondering is: what would withstand a constitutional challenge other than absolute, equitable distribution?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's part of what our committee has to - we're going to give it our best shot. We're going to come up with something that we believe will withstand a Charter challenge, but we're also determined to respect what we're hearing. We're not blindly accepting what's been done someplace else. We've all got views, and we may have very differing views. We've deliberately not sat down as a committee to talk to one another because we wanted to wait until we had finished the hearing process. We didn't think it was fair to the people in Rockyford if we had come here with a decision already in hand.

MISS YOLLAND: I guess I was kind of asking that as a rhetorical question, because to me it would seem that the only way anything could withstand a constitutional challenge would be if it were just equitable, being the number of the population versus representatives.

MS BARRETT: Can I respond to that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank first - he had his hand up - and then Pam.

MR. BRUSEKER: Where I think we all agree is that what we have right now would not withstand a Charter challenge because there are so many inequities in terms of area, in terms of population, in terms of population centres, in terms of miles of roads within the constituencies, and so on. What we have right now is very, very arbitrary. I think the task of this committee - the simplest route would be simply to say, "Okay, get a provincial average plus or minus 25 percent." What we've been hearing from a number of people is, "Yes, you have to solve that problem, but maybe take into account things like . . ." and there's a whole bunch of factors that we've had: distance within the constituency, the geographic area, how many miles of road

there are to travel, how far from the Legislature the MLA has to go.

For example, Bob Bogle down in Taber-Warner is probably about as far away as you can get since he lives about a stone's throw from the American border. He's probably the farthest away that you can be and still be an MLA in this particular jurisdiction. If he were any farther, he'd be running for the House of Representatives. So distance.

We've heard things like economic factors: how many jobs; what's the economy like in the area. I think what would stand a Charter challenge is if in addition to population we can come up with something that can be rationally and uniformly applied across the province. Now, I'm not sure what that would be. I mean, we've had a lot of people say: "Come up with some kind of a formula. Plug in the appropriate number, do the number crunching, and come up with your formula." We've had a lot of suggestions. One of them, for example, would be area, and if you look at the area of the Fort McMurray and Peace River constituencies, we could give a guy north of the city of Fort McMurray a huge area. There wouldn't be any people in it, but we could say, "Well, he's got a big area." So we can't go just on area; we know that.

So I'm not sure, but I think it has to be something that can be uniformly applied right across the province, and that's the kind of thing that will, I believe, withstand a Charter challenge. But I'm not a lawyer, so . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam, and then back to the gentleman.

MS BARRETT: All right. An example to answer your question is in the north of Canada. Yukon is entitled to one seat in the House of Commons, and the Northwest Territories is entitled to two seats. Their populations don't fall anywhere near the 25 percent rule. But there's a reason that's allowed, and it's because they've got, you know, a little village here and a little village there and it takes you a day to get between one and the other, and those are the two that are close together. So under some circumstances you can make an argument Charter-proof, but you have to take a sincere approach to it. You can't just sort of make up criteria and say, "Okay, challenge." You have to have a serious attitude. Obviously, the federal government has had that attitude and other provinces have, and successfully.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've had 14 lawyers give us advice and, as you can imagine, 14 different opinions. But one thing that has come through from the lawyers is that if you're looking at some kind of exception, justify it; don't just make an exception and not give reasons for it. You know, I've often cited that in my view one of the most difficult if not the most difficult riding to represent in this province from a geography point of view would be Chinook, the riding out by Hanna, because the entire constituency is settled; somebody lives everywhere. Now, some of those neighbours are pretty far apart, but there are small communities all over, and they're not all along one road. I know the effort Shirley McClellan, the current MLA, and the late Henry Kroeger – and I was very close to Henry – made to get across that constituency, keeping in mind that the largest community in the constituency is Hanna with – what? – 2,500 people. So it's a really sparsely populated riding, and yet there are people all over. The fact that we had to go back to Hanna a second time – on a per capita basis we heard more presentations in Hanna than anywhere else in the province. They're really concerned about their constituency because it is so sprawling.

Anyone else before we go to the gentleman over here? Let's go over to the gentleman, and then we'll come up here.

MR. WILSON: Jim Wilson, Drumheller.

I have a concern about that vast area, particularly in the north, but also I'm worried about this rural/urban split. I hate to see one versus the other. It reminds me too much of Ontario and Quebec versus the west or whatever. I would like to ask a question, I guess. How did that work out in Red Deer, where it looked like the ridings were part in the city and part in the rural?

MR. BRUSEKER: Answering your question there first of all, I think what they finally did in Red Deer was use the Red Deer county boundary, in fact, to come up with the new electoral divisions. But one of the things we have noticed: we've heard a number of people express the same concern that you're expressing, which is a concern about urban/rural split, and one of the things we've noticed in other jurisdictions – Alberta's current legislation is quite unique. It says that there shall be 42 urban and 41 rural; they shall be – and they list all the urban ones. Whereas if you go to British Columbia, it simply says that there shall be 75 constituencies, and the provincial average shall be 38,000 – I think – and no constituency shall be more than 25 percent plus or minus. There is no mention of rural and urban.

I think one of the things we've heard in a number of cases is that the labels of urban and rural – people are kind of getting hung up on that. I think what we're trying to do in our committee is make sure that we have effective representation for all Albertans regardless of where they live: north, south, east, or west; city, town, or village; or whatever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: In 1980 the city of Edmonton annexed a good chunk of land. I've got the far northeast corner of the city in my constituency, and I've got a number of farms. I certainly haven't got the proportion of rural voters to urban voters that Red Deer-North or Red Deer-South have, but I've got three polls in my constituency that could be classified as farm community, not acreages. As a primarily, I guess, urban MLA I serve those Albertans in my constituency the same way I serve any other Albertan. If it's a concern they've got about grain transportation getting out to Prince Rupert or if it's the farm fuel tax that's currently going on, those matters have to be addressed. I'm not afforded the opportunity – and I wouldn't do it – to say, "Well, you know, that's really a rural matter." As an Albertan who has the honour to represent a number of other Albertans, I've got to take all of those concerns. It's the same thing as an urban MLA; we've talked about this amongst ourselves. It's not just people from Edmonton-Belmont that contact me. I get telephone calls from the Peace River country, from all over Alberta, for any variety of reasons. Maybe they don't care for their member of the Legislature; maybe they've met me at some function and they think I can put a face to their name. Bob Bogle gets calls from all over Alberta as well. We happen to represent a geographical area that has a title – it's got the title of constituency – but all of us represent Albertans regardless of where they live. It just happens that we come from a community that has a title.

MS WISE: My name is Pat Wise, again. I think a lot of people are of the understanding, whether it's right or wrong or indif-

ferent, that the people representing them have an understanding, feel – whatever you want to call it – for that particular riding, whether they're urban and living in the city and understand the city people's needs, wants, and desires, or if they come from a farming community and they understand what the farmers are going through and their way of life and the small community and stuff like that. People in your riding would kind of think, since you said you were mostly urban, that you may not understand the needs and wants of a rural community.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, don't get me wrong, you know. There's nobody in the farming community of my constituency that would ever trust me with their farm equipment. It's not too likely they're going to allow me to get up on their equipment and ruin it for them.

MR. BRUSEKER: They've seen you drive.

MR. SIGURDSON: They've seen me drive. Those things don't go fast enough.

There are going to be times when problems come up that, quite frankly, it doesn't matter whether it would be farm related or something that could be construed as being specifically urban, I don't understand the issue. I'm not a biologist, I'm not a chemist, and when it comes to environmental matters, if I have to go and get some information about dioxins and furans, I've got to go and get that information. If it's health related with respect to Workers' Compensation Board problems, I've got to go and access that information if I'm going to advocate on behalf of an individual on an appeal level.

MS WISE: Oh, I understand that. I'm just saying that some people's perception of a representative is that they belong to their peers that voted for them.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good.

The two gentlemen here. Yes, sir.

MR. EDIGER: Peter Ediger of Rockyford.

I have to go along and say that 51 percent of the population – the golden rule applies: he who has the gold makes the rules. But that is why the people in small communities are getting so concerned, because the decisions are made by the bigger cities, and what applies to Calgary, such as a building code or anything like that, certainly does not apply in Rockyford. Or the inequity between voting on a federal level: after Ontario and Quebec have voted, how the rest of Canada votes is really irrelevant. So anything small kind of gets a little paranoid and feels that, you know, they're not being heard.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Couldn't you – like in Calgary-North West, you could make that a smaller riding: put some of them over into Calgary-Bow or Calgary-Foothills. Calgary-North West has . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Thirty thousand, three hundred. That's mine.

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Then here's Calgary-Foothills; it has about 23,000. And then Calgary-Bow . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: We've got about 54,000 between the two of us, Pat and I.

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Like I say, if you made Calgary-Foothills bigger and Calgary-North West smaller, and moved some of them into Calgary-Bow or even down in Calgary-Fish Creek, into Calgary-Egmont, which is a smaller one, and Calgary-Millican. Then you go over to Calgary-McCall. You could put some into Calgary-Montrose.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Remember that our task as a committee is not to draw lines but to establish the principles which we in turn will recommend back to the Assembly.

MR. KATTERHAGEN: Well, I was just going to say, your rurals have quite a few miles to travel to get to all their areas, whereas in the city you could practically walk it, if you wanted to, in the time you've got for an election. I know you really haven't done it.

MR. BRUSEKER: You can walk it. I mean, geographically it's quite small, and there's no doubt about it that even the smallest rural constituency, which is Wetaskiwin-Leduc, geographically is much larger than my constituency. But in order to be effective, you have to talk to the people. Just driving through the constituency isn't worth beans. I think back to the election campaign where I was out, for example, every single day. I managed to knock on 6,800 doors during a 28-day campaign, and that was almost half of the doors in my constituency. Even though the next house is right next door and maybe only 50 feet away, there's a heck of a pile of next-doors before you get through them all. I think the question was asked earlier: is there concern in urban Alberta? And that's the concern we're hearing too: just the sheer number of people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir, and then Pat.

MR. HELFRICH: Larry Helfrich, Rockyford.

I read through the minutes from the meeting you folks had up in Edson. Unfortunately, I agree with what you guys are faced with: that there are probably going to be some changes that are going to have to be made. But the thing that concerns me the most is that I'm wondering if by adding new constituencies in the urban areas, regardless of how many ridings we have, changing it – whether it's adding more, keeping the same number, decreasing what areas – it's still going to be the same amount in tax dollars. By increasing the number of urban ridings in the cities, if it's still going to be basically the same amount of money being spent per capita, you're going to have more people in the city fighting for a hospital in their area, more day care in their area. You've already got things in the city that people . . . Fifteen minutes to get to a hospital: they scream; they're excited; it's too far; they can't do it. I can make it to the closest hospital in 45 minutes if the police aren't on the road. We can live with that out here.

So my concern is: in any changes that are going to be made, how are they going to make up for the disparities? You could spend money in Calgary a lot more efficiently per person and cover everybody than you can out here. We need more money spent on our roads and whatnot just to keep us viable and

working out here, and forget about all the other social things: day care, welfare, social workers, this type of stuff. We don't have the people to warrant it; it's not accessible for everybody or they can't get to it. But, at the same time, we're doing without some things that are definitely taken for granted in Calgary. My worry and concern is: in changing those things, how is it going to affect us out here? Because in cutting back our representation – it's unfair that we've got more votes for the amount of people we have here, but at the same time my worry is: what's going to happen to the tax money, and how is it going to get back out? Are we going to be able to maintain things out here?

MS BARRETT: That's a very fair concern. It's been raised several times, although I must say not as clearly as you've just raised it. That's the inevitable tension of political systems and, I'm sorry to say, not even this committee will ever be able to resolve that. It takes a really active form of democracy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've made the comment, Larry, to several committee members in one-on-one discussions, that if this process were happening 10 years earlier, in 1980, they would have found a very different attitude in rural Alberta. Just think back to 1980. There was a lot of confidence, wasn't there? Our farmland was higher valued than it had ever been. We were selling our commodities. Real estate in small towns was good. There was a real feeling of confidence; we were on a roll. Then suddenly the bottom fell out. We got hit on our grain prices, our cattle prices. The province got hit on its oil prices, and suddenly we felt like urban Canada was ganging up on us, whether it was trying to close our local post office or a decision by one of the banks to centralize the cheque processing in Calgary and taking a staff member out of a Drumheller, a Taber, a Strathmore, or a Rockyford. There's a feeling now that we're fighting just to survive, and if anyone can add . . . That's my view of what's been happening: just the change in 10 years in a kind of feeling of almost a lack of confidence today on that point.

Go ahead, Tom, and then we're going to get to Pat.

MR. SIGURDSON: One of the things I've spoken about for a period of time and will probably continue to speak about for a long period of time is the way we have representation now. I don't think it's fair for any member of the Legislature to go out and try and represent their constituents alone. I'm one of those that have often said that what we ought to do is have all-party committees of the Legislature so that if it's health care and if there's an issue that has to be addressed, that committee travels around the province and then, when it gets back to the Legislature, makes a report much along the lines we're doing. I don't think it's fair for Stan Schumacher or the people of Drumheller to have dialogue with only one, because if Stan isn't able to deliver a facility that you need in your constituency, you might get very mad at Stan. There's no reason why there shouldn't be somebody from Calgary, somebody from Edmonton, somebody from perhaps northern Alberta touring Drumheller and saying: "Well, what are the needs here? It's a transportation need, it's a transportation committee, and we'll take that argument back on your behalf." Maybe Stan wouldn't even be on that particular committee. I would love to show other members of the Legislature that don't have to deal with high crime what it's like to be in certain parts of my constituency late at night, but that's not how we operate yet.

I would hope that one day we're going to have more all-party committees of the Legislature that tour the province such as this, because I think the committee report we have will be somewhat more reflective than having 83 people coming together and saying, "Well, these are the views of my constituents." Hopefully we're going to be able to collectively put the wisdom of Alberta into a report and deliver it to the Legislature. I think this is a far more effective way of representing people that we all represent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Yes.

MS WISE: I imagine you guys have done quite a bit of number crunching. If you were to go strictly with the plus or minus 25 percent rule, what would the representation look like then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If we applied the straight 25 percent rule and no exceptions, everything had to fit within?

MS WISE: Right. What would the rural Canadian representation be?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: If we used the Saskatchewan model, where we took all the rural down to the minus 25 percent and all the urban . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. That wasn't the question, Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: What's the crunching? What would be the split? I think I should explain the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, but the Saskatchewan model isn't what was asked.

MRS. BLACK: She said if you applied it, and he's giving you an example.

MS WISE: If you applied it in the strictest rule, it doesn't matter who falls in where, but as long as everybody falls in within 25 percent, what would it look like?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, if you'd let me explain, there are various combinations of urban/rural splits in some of the communities, favouring one against the other. I think you could look at losing maybe nine rural seats which would then be transported into the urban setting, one going into Medicine Hat, one going into St. Albert, three going into Edmonton and four in Calgary. But that is only one scenario. That's why I tried to present some parameters, because I can give you another scenario . . .

MS WISE: But that's about roughly . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: That would be one scenario.

MS WISE: So we'd pretty well have to lose nine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's the one that we might call the very worst case scenario, Pat. Agreed?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes.

MS WISE: But we'd end up losing just about 10.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the very worst.

Now, let me give an example. When we were in Brooks today, because Bow Valley is a riding that's under the magic line if you're using the plus/minus 25 percent, our committee threw the question out to those present: how would you feel . . . Because this was a brief made to us in Medicine Hat. Medicine Hat has more population than it should have for one riding but really doesn't have enough for two. One of the presenters in Medicine Hat said, "Why can't you take a sliver of Medicine Hat and add it to Bow Valley and a sliver and add it to Cypress-Redcliff?" The presenter went on to say, "Just ensure that in the new Bow Valley riding not more than 25 percent of the whole riding is made up of that sliver of Medicine Hat." Okay?

MS WISE: Yeah. I've heard that scenario before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we tossed it out today, and there was a surprising reaction in Brooks. They said, "Well, we're not that opposed to it." Now, the irony is that when you take that same scenario up against a metropolitan centre like Calgary or Edmonton, you get a stone wall. We get a reaction from people who say, "But Calgary and Edmonton are different."

Go ahead, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Again, when we were up in St. Albert, I believe it was the county of Strathcona that actually came up with new terminology. They have urban and rural within the county, but they have 'rurban.' They've actually put in place through their distribution within their county the three distinct areas, and they have adjusted their populations based on, again, geographic considerations and size as well as population for three distinct bodies and have gone to the people. The people have enjoyed it. Now, the 'rurban,' of course, is exactly part urban, part rural on both ends. It works. They are very pleased with it, and it works very well. Again, you can look at St. Albert. We had suggestions that if they sort of peel off the outside edge and expand it out, you could have a combination. Traditionally we have not combined urban and rural settings into an electoral division.

MS WISE: I think the major fear on that would be that if you had a chunk of, let's say, Calgary coming out to the rural area . . . Like somebody pointed out, it should be representing the whole area, not just that constituency, but everybody perceives it as that person representing that constituency. Since there are more people in the urban setting, then they squeak more than . . . The major proportion of the population, they'd get represented more.

MRS. BLACK: Can I just comment on that? I believe the suggestion was that you could combine the two provided the urban portion didn't account for more than 25 percent of the overall riding.

MS WISE: Oh, okay.

MRS. BLACK: Okay? So 75 percent would be rural, 25 percent urban. Naturally you wouldn't ignore the urban because it's 25 percent of the riding, but you would definitely not ignore rural. So you'd have to combine both and make that extra effort then.

MS WISE: They may not like that either.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Yes, ma'am.

MISS YOLLAND: I was just going to address the comment that Tom had made. I think it's great in theory, but practically speaking, you're going to be accountable to the people that put you into office. It's great to say we could travel around and get a general consensus and come back, but realistically I just don't know how that would work, because you're going to do what is in the best interests of the people that put you there.

Just a comment to get it off my chest: I'm so sick of that stupid Charter of Rights. Anyway, I guess we've got to contend with it. If we were going to have a pure, pure form of democracy, it would boil down to just the number of people, the number of votes, but I don't think that's in the best interests of the province of Alberta. So maybe what we could look at doing is possibly setting up some kind of ranking or rating system - say, geographic distance would be rated in so many points.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've had a number of briefs presented to us with formulas developed where they've tried to take into account factors like distance, the number of municipalities, school boards, and that sort of thing. So some people have actually come forward with ideas. We've had suggestions that there be two averages, one for urban Alberta and one for rural Alberta, and you do your plus/minus 25 percents away from that norm or those two norms. So options have been coming forward.

MISS YOLLAND: I certainly appreciate what a predicament it is though, because if we're talking about a true democracy, we're talking about number of votes per people. But unfortunately that kind of puts us in a really difficult situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Australia has had a tradition of two Houses, so you go through the various states in Australia and there's an upper and a lower House. In the lower House having a pure rep by pop works because they have a strong upper House. We don't have that in Canada. You know, we had one province, Quebec, with an upper House, and it was abolished some years ago.

Jim, I think you had your hand up.

MR. RAMSBOTTOM: Well, I think it's more of a question to your committee. I understand in the 38 other meetings you've had prior to this one, somebody made a presentation talking about the same thing, using a pie shape with the large part of the pie being rural and then running into a narrow point in the cities, all the way around Edmonton and Calgary, which would expand those outlying areas and at the same time combine urban and rural to give you maybe a sort of democratic approach or the best of two worlds. Did somebody in fact present something like that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. As I mentioned earlier, we've had suggestions, the spokes in the hub concept. But a number who said to combine the urban and rural went out of their way to exclude Calgary and Edmonton. They said they're a little bit different, because there are 17 members in Edmonton and 18 in Calgary and they're metropolitan centres. You know, it works in Red Deer. If Stockwell Day were here today as a member of our committee, I think he'd explain to you how it works in Red Deer-North, where his constituency is primarily urban but has a rural section. Before the last redistribution I had a corner of Lethbridge, and that was because of annexation, so I had about

500 voters who lived officially inside the city of Lethbridge. I've got one thirty second, is what I used to tell the mayor. So, you know, it can work. But the fear and the reason the presenter in Medicine Hat said to limit the size or limit the amount of city you'd put in that riding to no more than 25 percent is so it wouldn't suddenly dominate the whole riding.

MR. RAMSBOTTOM: One more comment, and this is from the selfish Albertan standpoint. Again with this split between rural and urban in the numbers, being a true Albertan, born here – and I'm an Albertan first and a Canadian second – what I'd be concerned about down the road 10 years and 15 years and 20 years is that our urban population in the larger metropolitan areas is not going to be Albertans and we'll be lucky if they're Canadians. That vote will eventually control us, and it won't even be us.

MR. McELROY: That's right.

MR. RAMSBOTTOM: I mean, maybe that's inevitable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, our committee's task is now, to address the now. What will happen in the future some other group will have to wrestle with.

MR. RAMSBOTTOM: But that's why we're fighting. We don't want to give it up until we absolutely have to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else? Yes, sir.

MR. McELROY: Tom, I commend you on your concept of an all-party committee, but if it puts on the circus the clowns put on in question period, I wouldn't want to have it. I've never seen such a waste of time in all my life as that.

I'd like to ask a question. I am annexed into the city of Calgary. I automatically move into another constituency in the next election?

MR. CHAIRMAN: In all likelihood you would.

MRS. BLACK: It depends what the boundaries are.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think in the past – am I not right, Pat? – when the city boundaries expand at the next redistribution, that becomes one of the Calgary constituencies.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Using the city of Calgary example, providing that those boundaries are established when the legislation is passed. Any area that's annexed after the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act comes into force would have a Calgary address but would still be in the rural electoral division.

MR. McELROY: But for the time being, I'd be annexed in, so in all likelihood I'll be in the city of Calgary for the next election.

MR. SIGURDSON: If and when the boundaries change.

MR. SCHUMACHER: I think it depends on the recommendations of this committee, as may be modified by the Legislative Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. I think the responses were based on current legislation. If the same practice applied, yes. Now,

remember there will be an opportunity when the commission is struck. There will be public hearings before any final decisions are made, so individuals and groups will have an opportunity to lobby either to be included in or excluded from a particular riding.

Yes, sir.

MR. HELFRICH: Larry Helfrich. One of the questions I've just kind of got now: say Drumheller would fall within the acceptable level. We go to make changes to, say, Chinook, Bow Valley. Could we end up seeing a constituency like Drumheller, which is the correct amount – when we go to make the changes, could Drumheller be split, made totally different? Say a straight line from corner to corner in Drumheller and then taking some of Chinook in. When they go to draw the new lines, the lines could be absolutely anywhere.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat, could you briefly describe the challenges the commission has when it's trying to draw lines and looking at a constituency that's right against the border of the province?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Basically, the problem is that you get into a domino effect in that if (a), for example, down in the southwest corner of the province has to be a minimum number, then you build (b) on top of that, (c) on top of that. It gets to be a domino effect. If you have to combine two and you can very easily make one, then that's easy. But if you have to take one and a half or two and a half, then you have to make some hard decisions. You'll find that the commission will actually be looking at nine separate factors when they draw their lines, and population will only be one of them. They'll be looking at transportation. They'll be looking at business areas. The chairman has mentioned voter input. Many factors.

To answer your question, it's possible that Drumheller could change significantly if you have to move up establishing new electoral divisions from the southeast, west, north, whatever.

MR. SIGURDSON: Pat will correct me if I'm wrong, but during the last commission when they were redrawing the map in Edmonton, of 17 seats in the city – right? – only three had boundaries that remained the same: Edmonton-Norwood, Edmonton-Highlands, and Edmonton-Strathcona. All of the others had some realignment somewhere, a lot of them pretty significant actually. But it was a domino effect.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder if we could get a couple more questions or comments, and then I'm going to ask Stan Schumacher if there are some concluding remarks he'd like to make. We'll try to wrap up, because I think we've got a good flavour for your thoughts and feelings.

Yes, behind first.

MISS YOLLAND: I was just going to say: representing a rural area, how do you feel? Are you going to address it after?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, I think your MLA should make some comments toward the end.

MR. ROPPEL: Has this 25 percent that has been adopted in principle by some other jurisdictions on any occasion been challenged as still not coming close enough to the ideal?

MR. CHAIRMAN: As Mr. Ledgerwood pointed out, in Saskatchewan there is a challenge which is scheduled but has not yet been heard. Next month, Pat?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: They have not set a court date yet, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Haven't set a court date. Okay.

MR. ROPPEL: Manitoba went to 10, was it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Manitoba went to 10. I should point out that in Manitoba there was a three-member commission. The most senior federal judge for the province, the president of the University of Manitoba, and the Chief Electoral Officer all reside in the city of Winnipeg. Under normal circumstances it probably would have worked, because the Chief Electoral Officer was the person with the knowledge, but unfortunately he was extremely ill. They wound up eliminating two rural constituencies and creating two more in the city of Winnipeg, and we were told by members of all three political parties when we were there that they really didn't have to do that. They could have stayed within plus/minus 10 percent and not carved up two ridings. Now they've got one huge riding in the north which is - what, Tom? - 1,000 miles long?

MR. SIGURDSON: It's 1,060 miles long by 990 miles wide.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you imagine? I mean, it's just absolutely crazy. It occupies a quarter of the province.

MR. ROPPEL: Well, that must put over half the seats in Winnipeg.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now over half the seats are in Winnipeg. So one of the lessons for us is to ensure that the commission has balance on it, a balanced north/south, urban/rural.

MR. ROPPEL: What has Ontario done with this? It would seem to me that the so-called Golden Horseshoe - Oshawa, Toronto, Hamilton, or whatever - would have way over half the population of Ontario, wouldn't it?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The current election in Ontario is being fought on 130 seats. The House when it dissolved had 125 seats. They've added five seats, and they're all within the plus or minus 25 percent factor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Was there another hand up that I missed? Anyone else before we go to Stan?

All right, Stan.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, I want to express my appreciation to the committee for coming to the constituency of Drumheller and hearing the points of view of some members of our constituency.

I would like to say that in a previous incarnation I had the practical experience of representing a mixed constituency in the

federal constituency of Palliser. On the map it looked like a rural constituency going from just west of the Stony Indian Reserve, as a matter of fact, in the west to just east of Drumheller in the east and just north of Didsbury in the north and the Bow River - well, two miles south of Highway 1 in the south. But in that constituency I had the honour of representing most of the people who lived in Calgary-West, all the people who reside in Calgary-Bow, all the people that reside in Calgary-North West, two-thirds of the people who reside in Calgary-McKnight, most of the people who live in Calgary-McCall, and a large portion of Calgary-Millican. In the 1974 election over half the people in the constituency lived in Calgary. I lived in Drumheller and represented this very area too. I didn't feel inhibited at all by the fact that it was predominantly so-called urban people. There were never any severe conflicts of interest in that representation. So I hope when the committee comes to write a report it will not be averse to considering breaking the mold of having strictly urban and rural seats, because I think there's something to be said for this 25 percent. But I think it could go to 35 percent urban easily as a modifying effect, or maybe you'd want to say a civilizing effect or sophistication effect, on these constituencies. But I think it's something that should be looked at.

I just want to close by saying that I appreciate the work on behalf of the citizens of Drumheller constituency. I know we appreciate the work this committee is doing, and we wish it well in coming up with a report that will be acceptable to all Albertans.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much.

In conclusion, as was previously mentioned, this is our 38th meeting, and it's a unique meeting. They've all been unique in one way or another, but this one is unique in that we've not had any formal presentations and yet it's obvious that each and every one of you who have come out tonight are deeply concerned, have ideas, have some questions. You've shared your thoughts with us tonight. You've asked some questions. Members of the panel have tried to respond as openly as they can. I hope you are going away a little more knowledgeable about where we are. I can assure you that your input is helping us, because that along with the input from all the other meetings is being - we're keeping track of this by computer. Obviously we can't keep it all in our heads. We're able to pull out of the briefs which have been presented the most important point, the second most important point. Then when we want to see how many people talked about Triple E Senate as a concept, we can identify those numbers, or how many talked about ensuring that we're staying with a pretty precise representation by population formula. We can pull all that material out while we're trying to deliberate and draw our conclusions.

So again, thank you so much for taking time from your busy schedules at an important time of the year. I know there are things you'd all rather be doing than coming to a meeting like this with us, but we do appreciate the input and the effort you made.

Thanks very much.

[The committee adjourned at 8:25 p.m.]