

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act

Hon. Members wish to avail themselves of that opportunity. I neglected to indicate to Hon. Members that opportunity is available and perhaps I should correct that immediately.

Questions and answers dealing with objection No. 19 and the address made by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Then, debate. The Hon. Member for Algoma, with my apologies.

Mr. Foster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to add only a couple of words to the remarks by the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt because I have received the same representations, as I am sure other Members from northern Ontario have, on the objections of the Towns of Nickel Centre and St. Charles. I am sure the Commissioners will take into account all those representations made by the Hon. Member.

I just want to make a few comments generally about the process because, although we were rather frightened with the original maps published for northern Ontario where we seem to have a great deal of difficulty with the redistribution process, I think with the exception of the Nickel Belt riding and the obvious difficulties which the Hon. Member has outlined today, there has been a general acceptance by other Members in northern Ontario that the final maps prepared dealt generally very well with the representations and suggestions made at the hearings last January in Sudbury and Ottawa. Indeed, the Commission, I think, did an admirable job in establishing an average population for the 11 seats in northern Ontario at 70,993 people, whereas in southern Ontario it was about 15 per cent more, or 83,449 electors per constituency based on the 1981 census. That takes into account the vast size of the constituencies, the difficulty of drawing lines and getting a reasonable balance of size and community of interests, and the possibility of the Members serving those constituencies after they are elected. For example in my own constituency they recommended that a large portion of the area north of Sault Ste. Marie be put in with the Kapuskasing-Cochrane-Superior riding, and indeed they responded to those representations, I think, in a very good way.

I believe the vast majority of Members in the north are quite satisfied with the redistribution, with the exception of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt. I am sure the representations that she has made here this afternoon so effectively will be taken into account by the Commissioners in their final proclamation of the electoral boundaries. I think it is important that Members not only say when there are objections but also when things are right, because sometimes boundaries tend to be changed if nobody stands up and says what is right about the redistribution.

There are a couple of small, technical objections which I would like to make concerning the Algoma riding. I am generally very happy with the redistribution which has taken place, mostly because it represents a continuation of the existing boundaries and it is very confusing for people who are not very conscious of political boundaries to have those

changed every ten years. Of course, they are not only changed federally but provincially.

There are a couple of small, technical suggestions I would like to make to the Commission in drafting their final boundaries, and one is the Carscaden poll which is located immediately adjacent to the Town of Onaping Falls in the Nickel Belt riding. I ask that it be located within the Nickel Belt riding because of the community of interests, the geography and the general means of transportation between those areas.

Likewise, in the City of Sault Ste. Marie, at the opposite end of my constituency towards the West, in the drawing of the boundaries between the Algoma constituency and the City of Sault Ste. Marie constituency, I think it would really simplify matters a great deal if they were to run the boundary line between the two constituencies along People's Road from the second line to the city boundaries just to make it more simple and easy for people to remember where the boundary is and to easily identify it. I would like to see those two small amendments taken into account by the Commission in their final boundary determination.

I think the process has worked fairly well this time. It has been generally responsive to most of the ten Members in the north, if not to the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt. But I am sure they will be considering her objections.

I think we as Members recognize that when you are dealing with 88 per cent of the land mass of the Province of Ontario and trying to carve up northern Ontario into 11 constituencies, it is a difficult task to bring together a community of interests to a manageable size and to take into account transportation routes and systems, media systems, distribution of information and all the rest of it. I think that on the whole they have done a very good job in the north, and I just want them to know that so that in any additional changes they make those suggestions and recommendations will be borne in mind.

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, my intervention will be a brief one but it does arise from the concerns expressed to the House by the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mrs. Erola). If the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Ontario were to take seriously and answer the grievances presented to the House by the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt, the vast region of northern Ontario, one of the very important resource regions of this country, could be facing once again the dilemma and agony we faced at the last redistribution, namely the loss of another seat.

● (1440)

Some Hon. Members in the House will remember the last redistribution and the extreme disquiet and dismay that was felt by the Members of Parliament for northern Ontario and the people they represented, not simply on the question that one Member of Parliament might not have a seat and could not continue on. That was not the issue. The issue involved the northern part of the Province of Ontario which, in terms of its land mass, in excess of 50 per cent of the Province, has always