

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants):** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to make a brief intervention and compliment the member for Don Valley West in bringing forth this bill.

The hon. member for Brant raised some interesting technical points. The whole motion here before us, as I read it, is to refer the bill to a legislative committee so that some of these matters could be discussed further. I was really quite surprised and very interested initially in the remarks of my hon. friend from Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis. I really thought he was going to be wholeheartedly in support of the bill. He, as I understand it, has some of the same problems I have. His riding is obviously more urban than rural. Mine is more rural than urban.

However, the reason I am most interested in the bill of the hon. member for Don Valley West is that all the problems of election that were mentioned by other members about election day are there. I am not going to repeat them. The thing that cannot really be explained to voters is that just because of a division on the street and one happens to be on the urban poll and one is in the rural poll, that under the present Elections Act that urban voter, as everyone has said, just cannot get to vote.

His neighbour across the street, depending on the boundary between the urban and the rural poll, as it is in many areas of my riding, that person under the law can go and be sworn in. I really think it is a step in the right direction.

With all respect to my hon. friend from Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, who used to be an eminent chairman of the Conservative caucus, I would think he would be totally behind this bill. Pierre Lortie, the chairman of the Electoral Commission, is someone for whom I have the highest respect. I appeared before that committee on several matters of concern to me. I was also pleased to be a member invited on a seminar he held and he held different seminars on different parts of the country on phases of his mandate. I know it is the intent to bring forward that commission report in late November. We all know the realities of reports and royal commissions.

As I understand it, he is not only intending to bring forward a royal commission report, he is intending to bring forward a draft bill to help expedite the discussion.

My fear is, in terms of reality and all the changes in the world and/or changes that may be in the progress of bills through this House as we move closer to an electoral date, that with the best intentions in the world, the Electoral Commission report of Mr. Lortie and his commissioners will perhaps not get through the House in time for another election.

I think it would be a really unfortunate situation if we could not first help the Lortie commission by having this sent to a committee so they could see some of the concerns of members that might help them in their report.

In any event, having it come out of committee and make that small change in terms of the total ambit of the Elections Act, but certainly a very fundamental change affecting so many voters in Canada, I do not think the Lortie commission would feel compromised at all. I think that might be one thing they might be very pleased about, along with all the other questions about permanent lists and everything else.

I think we should give it support, get it in to committee, have further discussion as hon. members have already raised, and then get this changed so that all voters in Canada are treated equally on election day.

**Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park):** Mr. Speaker, just after the November 21, 1988 election, I quickly wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer because I had some very angry constituents who were left off the voters' lists and could not vote. One constituent had a sandwich board and was walking along the main street, protesting because of the loophole and the weakness in our law. As she pointed out, if she had lived on a farm in a rural area she would have had the right to vote but, because she happened to live in the city of Toronto, she was denied the right to vote.

In the 1984 election we had enumerators miss out a whole sixplex. If you have three or four voters in a sixplex, that is the difference between winning and losing an election.

Mr. Speaker, when you win an election by 74 votes like I did in 1979, you know the importance of each vote, especially the ones who are left off the lists through no fault of their own. Many of these people with their jobs are out of the country when the enumerators come