

Mr. Speaker, my home is in Sept Îles and when I arrive in my riding, if I want to go to the eastern most part of it, the Blanc-Sablon region, I still have 550 miles to go, which means a day of flying to get there and another day to return.

I would also like to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, and the attention of the House to the fact that the riding of Manicouagan also includes the Ungava Bay region, with Inuit villages located 600 or 700 miles north of Montreal and Sept Îles.

This is to tell you that for a member who represents a riding like that, a developing riding, a riding with countless needs, a riding where in some places we have to start from scratch, the present schedule of the House makes the member's work extremely difficult.

I would like to point out to the House that our constituents elected us not only to spend many hours in the House of Commons making laws, although that is important work; they elected us to be able to talk to us, to be able to spend time with us elected members, to be able to express to us their concerns and familiarize us with their needs and to work with them to set up services; to work with them in dealing with federal government bodies to prepare projects for improving conditions, improving federal government services in our regions.

I touched briefly on how one gets around my riding. I would also mention that the communities in two thirds of my riding are not connected by road. Some places in my riding are accessible by boat only in summer, or by plane, and in winter, when the boat service is discontinued, these villages in my riding are accessible only by plane.

I would also like to point out to the House, that the villages throughout the eastern part of my riding are not connected by road. So if I as member of Parliament for Manicouagan want to visit those villages, meet the people and spend time with them, in many cases, most of the time, I have to go by snowmobile, or by boat in summer.

Mr. Speaker, you will understand that for a member from a remote region, whose riding is extremely large, it is extremely difficult to travel there. Spending whole weeks here, week after week, day after day, while the House sits is very inconvenient and obviously makes doing our job as members of Parliament extremely difficult.

Government Orders

Mr. Speaker, I think that the changes that the government proposes to the schedule of the House make very important improvements. Sitting for three consecutive weeks and then being able to go to our ridings for one week, for me in any case, for a member from a remote region who has to represent a very large riding, for me—I will be able to work much more effectively and productively for my constituents, the citizens of my riding. During the three weeks that the House sits, when the members are required to be in Ottawa, during those three weeks, we will be able to work effectively, both in the House and in committees.

So, Mr. Speaker, being here three weeks at a time will enable us to deal directly and strictly with the business of the House, the standing committees and the legislative committees and concentrate our work and effort on the proceedings of the House, the committees, on the process of making, amending and reviewing legislation.

During the fourth week, we can return to our ridings, take time to meet our constituents, attend their meetings, arrange to meet them, help them prepare projects, help them in their dealings with various federal government bodies.

I would also like to give some thought to the future. It might be said that it is fairly easy for me to travel from Ottawa to Sept Îles or from Sept Îles to Ottawa every week because air travel that way is easy. It is true about commuting between Ottawa and Sept-Îles. But in a foreseeable future, someone from the Lower South Shore could be elected to represent the riding of Manicouagan in Ottawa. Imagine for a moment, Mr. Speaker, what it would be like for a person living in Natashquan, having been elected as member for Manicouagan, to leave Ottawa Friday afternoon on the 4 p.m. flight to Quebec City, then catch a plane to Sept-Îles and, Saturday morning, get up and travel to Natashquan, and to have to be back in Ottawa by Monday to attend the House proceedings.

You will understand, it would make it almost impossible for anyone from that part of the riding to efficiently fulfill his or her obligations as member of Parliament in the best interest of his or her constituents.

In that sense, Mr. Speaker, the proposed schedule is certainly making the job more attractive for people who live in small communities allowing greater flexibility and making the organization of their work schedule easier. This could encourage people from small localities to run