

*Government Orders*

The second option would be the reverse of the first. That would be to establish the number of Canadians that an MP would represent and divide that number into the total number of Canadians. This would make the number of MPs the variable that would change each time we reviewed and updated this process.

Two points to note are that regardless of which option is employed the electoral boundaries of constituencies will change. In both options the existing boundaries within our country do not influence the designating of federal electoral boundaries. It is strictly on head count.

● (1130)

Before moving on to the geographic concerns I wish to comment further on these two options. I favour the establishing of a given number of MPs, say 295, and increasing the number each represents as required.

If we were to do the opposite and increase the number of MPs each time we would be creating problems that would repeat themselves each time we updated our electoral representation or legislation and we would look for solutions each time.

The first problem that comes to mind is accommodation of the added MPs. A possible solution to this requires an expansion of this building or the room and that in turn would generate or create the problem of finding the dollars to pay for it. The expansion of this building or the room would not apply if we had a cap on the numbers of MPs and increased the numbers they represented each time.

A second possible solution to increasing the number of MPs is to utilize the communication highway where we could all stay at home and chat with each other from there. The ramifications of this present a debate in itself and is best left for some other day. I cannot help but wonder that if this ever came to pass considering the size of our country the first obstacle that we would probably debate would be the start and finish times of MP duty times.

A third possible solution to increasing the number of MPs, and this would be taken over using this approach over a long period of time, is that we could possibly end up with so many MPs that the solutions to address that issue at that time may be such things as shift work or breaking up into small groups of MPs and rotating one or two of us through the House Monday through Friday.

To get back to the reality of now, we have 295 members and the House is full. There is probably not even enough room here now to suggest a renovation activity to provide the same amount of leg room for the MPs in the top three rows as in the bottom two rows. We are that full.

If each member spoke for 20 minutes and then responded to 10 minutes questions or comments we would need 147.5 hours of

agenda time. Along with this we are in Ottawa approximately 26 weeks of 52, or half a year, and if each of these weeks were allowed 25 hours of agenda time, we would have a total 650 hours. If we divided that by the number of MPs and each participated, each one of us would be able to speak 2.2 times a year.

By increasing the number of MPs we would decrease the number of opportunities that each of us would have to participate in the debates in this House and other business. There is not time.

Keeping the number of MPs in the House constant and varying the number that each represents can create some problems or concerns. The most notable would be the inequity in the number of square miles of each constituency. To achieve the numbers involved in the two options the densely populated areas would be geographically small and the less dense would be large to horrendously large.

A possible solution to this and in keeping with representation by population is to address the process aspect of this procedure and adjust the MPs' constituency budgets to accommodate this. For example, in small geographic areas one constituency office is close enough to each constituent to allow them to visit their MP when he or she is in the area. In large geographic areas two or more offices may be necessary to achieve this same effect. Along with the budget adjustments to accommodate the extra offices we would probably have to look at travel expenses. This implies a cost consideration. A cost consideration would also be applicable if we increased the number of MPs. There may be other possible solutions within the process area to address this issue.

● (1135)

Another possible concern in relation to keeping the number of MPs constant would be the ability of the MP to adequately represent the ever increasing numbers of citizens. I believe the solution to this concern lies within the realms of communicating and the availability of the communication vehicles to do so.

To comment on the electoral boundaries for a moment, we seem to have restricted our approach to establishing federal electoral boundaries by attempting to work within some of the existing internal boundaries. We have three levels of government and all are elected by the people and each have a specific number of elected representatives. City and municipal governments do not divide their areas into boundaries. Their geographic areas are small enough not to.

Provincial governments have larger areas and do divide them, not necessarily according to the city or municipal boundaries but according to population numbers.

A possible approach to this on the federal scene is to consider the boundaries on the federal scene as those of the country and again the whole area would be divided according to population.