

one-eleventh of the province's Members. It seems to me that that is a reasonable proportion, recognizing the geographical challenges that we face.

As my friend, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt, said, a Member of Parliament representing a riding in Toronto may have a great many constituents, but that Member, if he or she could see through walls, would be able to see all of his or her constituents. Certainly such a Member could cast his or her eye about and see well beyond the boundaries of the constituency. It is easy to get about in those circumstances. One could surely walk across one's constituency without even having to take advantage of the Toronto public transit system. That offers opportunities for contact and a very limited loss of time in travelling from office to constituents. Those are factors which make the task of the urban Member of Parliament, even if his or her riding is growing rapidly, a more manageable challenge than the challenge we who represent this very large part of the Province of Ontario face.

I am very grateful for the efforts the committee has made. I appreciate the work of my friend, the Hon. Member for Churchill, on the committee. I appreciate the responsiveness of the committee membership and of the President of the Privy Council in bringing forward these motions. I look forward to the sensitivity and care with which the boundaries commission for Ontario will consider the question of how the people of northern Ontario may be properly represented in the Canadian Parliament.

**Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury):** Mr. Speaker, let me begin by indicating that I am in the rather fortunate position of being the only Member of Parliament from northern Ontario who represents an urban riding. While I heard the very eloquent speeches made by my colleagues from northern Ontario who are members both of the NDP and of the Liberal Party, I must confess that I am fortunate in the sense that I do not have to deal with all the problems they do in order to represent my constituents properly. However, I will say that as a resident of northern Ontario, I feel very strongly about the intent of the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) and the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster). Frankly, neither Member would care to make debating points here on the floor of the House of Commons as long as the Government listens to the intent of both amendments; namely, to make sure that, when the electoral boundaries are changed and the number of seats in the House of Commons is increased, 11 seats remain for the geographic area known as northern Ontario.

The Hon. Member for Algoma, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt and the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay-Nipigon (Mr. Epp) have indicated the difficulty they face in getting around their ridings in northern Ontario. I can speak from experience in that when I had the fortune to represent the regional municipality of Sudbury as the chairman of that larger centre, I often travelled to Toronto to indicate to the provincial Government the necessity of making sure that we retained the same number of MLAs. The Province of Ontario

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has guaranteed that the numbers will remain, and I see no reason why the federal Government should not indicate its support for the basic principle that there is more than representation by population at stake in this issue.

I have often said that northern Ontario has 10 per cent of the population of the province but 80 per cent of the land mass. If a Member is to serve his constituents properly, the rule of thumb of representation by population must have some flexibility. Otherwise the Members who represent northern Ontario are not going to be effective in representing their constituents' interests.

I recall very well the debate which occurred during the previous Parliament. At that time, the Government wished to change some of the boundaries for the ridings in northern Ontario. One of the astounding proposals made by the commission was that the Town of Nickel Centre which sat in the middle of the riding of Nickel Belt was to be taken from that riding and given to the riding of Timiskaming. Everyone in the House knows that that would have meant that the Member of Parliament for Timiskaming would visit the Town of Nickel Centre, a town with a population of 10,000 or 11,000, perhaps only once every two years. The only ridings in this country which would be comparable in terms of area to those in northern Ontario would be those in northern Quebec and the Territories.

In addition, all of us, whether we are of Conservative, Liberal or NDP persuasion, have cried foul for many years about the way in which the national air carriers and railway services have been delivered into the northern parts of Ontario. Therefore, it is even more important, given the track record of Governments and their failures, to commit themselves to a reasonable standard of service with respect to transportation facilities in northern Ontario. It is more important for the Government to recognize the fundamental right to maintain 11 electoral districts in northern Ontario. If the Government does not maintain them then the people who will suffer under this type of change will be the people who live in the North.

● (1230)

I do not make my remarks to take away from some of the arguments which have been made in the House with respect to the need for additional representation in southern Ontario. That has absolutely nothing to do with the argument. The Hon. Member for Nickel Belt said it well when he indicated that it is one thing for a Member of Parliament to fly from Ottawa in one hour, land at Pearson International Airport and in a very concentrated way service a riding such as Scarborough which has approximately 155,000 to 175,000 constituents. I do not take away from the workload of that Member of Parliament. However, it is a far cry from the physical necessity of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt, or for the Hon. Member for Algoma to fly from Ottawa via Toronto, land in his home constituency of Sudbury or Sault Ste Marie and then start off in an automobile trek to cover up to several thousand square miles in order to service his constituents properly.