

Government Orders

THE SENATE

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, second I have a petition signed by over 500 people, mostly from Saskatoon, calling on the government to take measures to abolish the Senate, bearing in mind that it is the home of Tory and Liberal patronage without any basic interest to the Canadian taxpayer.

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Shall the questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT SUSPENSION ACT, 1994

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-18, an act to suspend the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: This is my ruling on Bill C-18, an act to suspend the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

[Translation]

There are three motions in amendment on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-18, An Act to suspend the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

[English]

Motions Nos. 1, 2 and 3 will be grouped for debate but voted on as follows:

- (a) Motion No. 1 will be voted on separately.
- (b) The vote on motion No. 2 will apply to motion No. 3

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-18 be amended in Clause 2 by replacing line 9, on page 1, with the following:

"until twelve months after the day on".

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we continue down the trail of haste dealing with Bill C-18, the bill to suspend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, we suddenly find ourselves at report stage, having gone through a rather hurried committee stage just before the Easter break.

We had gone through a rather hurried committee stage process in dealing with what actually amounts to a very simple bill that tampers with the existing act by suspending it until some unknown and undrafted act is put in its place, or 24 months expire and we do not come up with a solution or a better process for dealing with boundary readjustment. The boundary readjustment process is designed to be a non-partisan politically neutral exercise. By introducing Bill C-18 the government is compromising that neutrality.

• (1015)

Elections Canada goes to great lengths to ensure that we have a fair, democratic and unbiased electoral system. We as parliamentarians should respect that principle no matter how these proposed changes may affect us personally.

The process has a built-in appeal structure through which interested groups and individuals, including members of Parliament, can express their concerns about the changes. There has been no great outcry from Canadians to justify Parliament prematurely interfering with these readjustments that are under way.

Those members who are unhappy with the proposed changes can make representation at the appeal hearings. I might add that I have asked to be heard at the appeal hearing in Saskatchewan. Hopefully the process will not be suspended before I have that opportunity.

This is supposed to be a non-political process. An MP should have no more right to effect changes to the electoral boundaries than any other Canadian citizen.

The redistribution that occurred in the past resulted in similar grumblings from MPs but barely a whisper from the electorate. The redistribution of 1974 following the 1971 census was similarly challenged by MPs. It would seem that the Liberal government of the time did not like those proposed changes either and after much debate decided to create 18 new constituencies and send a new commission out to do the work all over again. It sounds familiar, does it not?

Taxpayers will not accept the cost of redoing the commission's work or the cost of additional MPs. This in itself is justification for not supporting the government's proposal for interfering with the electoral process.