

Government Orders

• (1655)

I want to close by saying I appreciate the opportunity to make my final remarks on Bill C-69. For all of the reasons I have put forward in my speech at third reading, I urge the House not to pass Bill C-69. We are not getting the job done. If we are not prepared to face the issue square on and if we keep wanting to put off the tough decisions into the future, those decisions will become even tougher to make.

If we let this House expand to 320 members, some 20 more people will have a vested interest in maintaining their seats in this House of Commons and not seeing the size of this House reduced. It is going to have a negative snowball effect which is not good for the country. Unfortunately there are too many politicians in this place who have a vested interest and are not able to put the well-being of the country ahead of their own self-interests.

I urge all members of this House to do the right thing, the thing even Liberals argued for in committee, to cap the size of the House, to respect representation by population, and to vote against Bill C-69.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to very briefly run over the very positive aspects of the bill before the House today. I am afraid the opposition members, as is their wont, have dwelt on the negative aspects.

We have heard the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster complain about two aspects he feels were not there. We have to deal with what is there. We have a good bill here and the hon. member should have acknowledged that and indicated supported for it in his speech.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Bellechasse had several complaints about things that were not in the bill, but what is in the bill is clearly quite acceptable to everyone, and he should support the bill for that reason.

[English]

The bill provides a new, and I suggest better, appointment process for commissions and for the commissioners. It puts a limit on the need to appoint commissions in provinces where there have not been significant population shifts. That is a major change. It will save money. We have another major money saving device in this bill. Redistributions will cost less as a result of this bill.

We have established quinquennial review, that is quinquennial redistributions in provinces where there have been significant population shifts within the province. Therefore we will avoid massive changes every 10 years.

We put a new clause with new directions to commissions instructing them on how to do the redistribution within the boundaries they decide on. We have suggested new ways of doing it that in my view are more restrictive than the rules that were there before. We directed them more pointedly to deal with items such as community municipal boundaries and boundaries of existing electoral districts. I think it is a significant improvement. All the members of the committee agreed it was an improvement when we made those changes.

There are limits which I suggest are much tighter on the right of commissions to deviate beyond the 25 per cent limit on the provincial quotients. Now they cannot create a riding that is bigger than the limits, which they could do before. Those are prohibited. They can only create one that is smaller than the 25 per cent deviation. That is circumscribed very tightly because it must be geographically isolated from the province or very remote. Without quoting the exact words, it is significantly different from what it was before. Again, the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster who harps on this point has fewer grounds to complain than he had in the previous bill. He should be supporting this bill.

The publication of plans is different. There will be three of them. There will be an opportunity to comment before the maps are published for the first time. The member for Kindersley—Lloydminster says that the maps presently drawn by the boundaries commissions are thrown out the window. That is not true. They could be used as one of the three maps by the new commissions. There is no reason in the world why those could not be used as one of the three options put forward by the commissions when they publish maps.

Members will have an opportunity to comment with members of the public in advance of publication, after publication and after significant changes in the maps.

This is an improved process. It is more open. We have rid ourselves of the parliamentary review. We have made the process more open, more accountable to public pressure, and more accessible to the general public in that sense.

• (1700)

We have abolished the very expensive publication process for the maps. We have made them available to people who want them, not to publish them in newspapers at great public expense. It is saving literally millions of dollars.

The commissions will give reasons for their decisions, which was not the case before. This will help explain to the public why the commissions have drawn boundaries in the locations they have. The period for implementation of redistribution has been shortened under the bill so that it will happen in a faster time frame than was the case before.