

Electoral Boundaries Commission

[Editor's note: The report above referred to is as follows:]

Bellechasse	32,513
Bonaventure	42,962
Brome-Missisquoi	43,217
Compton-Frontenac	42,366
Dorchester	38,953
Îles de la Madeleine	12,479
Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm	102,717
Kamouraska	35,312
Labelle	45,701
Longueuil	107,318
Lotbiniere	38,529
Montmagny-L'Islet	40,987
Dollard	107,394
Jacques Cartier-Lasalle	163,148
Laurier	45,652
Laval	193,437
Maisonneuve-Rosemont	108,023
Mercier	233,964
Mount Royal	128,524
Notre Dame de Grace	100,719
St. Ann	38,173
St. Lawrence-St. George	34,020
Nicolet-Yamaska	45,192
Pontiac-Temiscamingue	41,069
Quebec-Montmorency	138,030
Stanstead	43,309
Terrebonne	102,450
Vaudreuil-Soulanges	38,756

Mr. Vincent: A few moments ago I was saying that the member for a rural riding has a lot more representation work to perform, more organizations to meet, and this, I believe, everybody will admit. In cities or in urban ridings, there is often only one municipal council, one post office, one mail distribution, one unemployment insurance office and one national employment office. The distances are shorter and communications easier when one travels or phones. Many constituents work in the same locality and they have the same problems. Therefore, less work is required on the spot from the member.

Far from me to suggest that even if a member for a rural riding has more representation work to do, he actually works more than the representative of an urban riding, or even that the urban representative works less than his colleague from a rural riding. No.

What happens is that the member representing a rural riding has less time to study legislation and the general problems of his country. That must be taken into account because the political future of rural ridings, I say it again, depends on that margin of 20 or 33½ per cent. Besides, if I am not mistaken, Hon. Jean Lesage himself stated, when he was elected Liberal party leader in Quebec, that as leader he preferred to represent an urban riding because he thus had more time to himself.

[Mr. Vincent.]

What about the defeat at the polls of a former premier of Quebec, Hon. Adelard Godbout, who represented a rural riding. He confirmed himself later that had he represented an urban riding he would have had more time to look after his party's business and that it was the lack of time which led to his defeat, because he could not be in his riding often enough.

Another example I could quote is the case of two ministers who succeeded each other in the federal electoral district of Lotbiniere. Both of them, although of different political parties, were defeated in this rural constituency, and the main reason given by the voters is the following: "We have not seen them often enough in our parishes, at our ceremonies", or else, "they were incapable of maintaining an office in their riding on account of their duties and obligations as ministers".

Furthermore, whether we impose upon the commission or commissions—I have not yet had time to study this aspect of the matter, but I shall go back to it at the committee stage—a tolerance of 20 per cent, it would mean that, in some cases, where for reasons pertaining to geography, economy or others, even if they had good reasons to do so, the commissioners wanted to fix the limit at 21, 22, 23 or even 26 per cent, they would be required under the law to retain a tolerance of 20 per cent. The commissioners would, therefore, be required to ignore some geographic or economic factors, because the law of this parliament would compel them to fix this limit at 20 per cent.

I should now like to outline two situations that members of the electoral boundaries commissions will certainly meet with.

Let us take a rural riding where, for certain economic reasons, the population is expected to increase considerably. In spite of this expectation, electoral districts will have to be redistributed temporarily and later on, that is, in five or 10 years, other major changes will have to be made. This example applies to several rural constituencies located in the vicinity of cities, and more especially to the riding of Nicolet-Yamaska, whose population is expected to increase considerably in the next five or 10 years due to the setting up of steel complex in the near future.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I wish to tell you that the question we are dealing with at present is very important, since we have to decide whether we should accept a 20 per cent tolerance or a 33½ per cent tolerance. If we accept a 20 per cent tolerance, it will be absolutely impossible for us to take a reverse action. On the other hand, if we accept