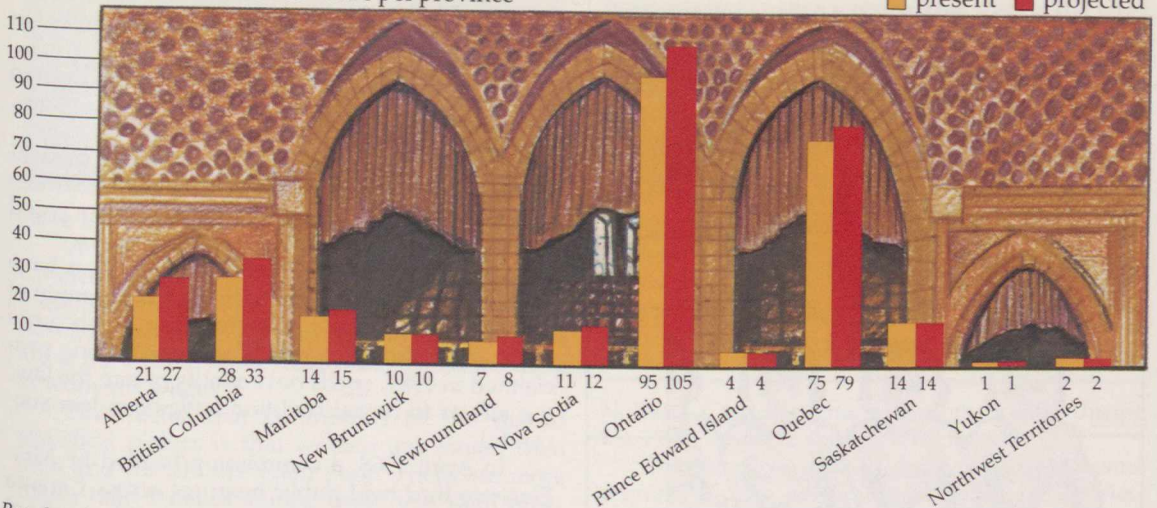


## HOUSE OF COMMONS MPs per province



Based on the 1981 census, there will be a total of 310 ridings in the next election, up from the current 282. (The redistribution has not yet been confirmed by the House of Commons and is unofficial.)

downtown core and thousands of empty apartment units?"

Still, the picture is not totally dark — Petro Canada is considering construction of a new tar sands plant near Fort McMurray and that would give a significant boost to the economy.

Hans Maciej, technical director of the Canadian Petroleum Association, says the oil industry "is a lot leaner and smarter now," and John Zaozirny, the province's minister of energy and natural resources, is cautiously optimistic: "We've begun to reverse the downward movement in terms of both industry activity and, just as important, in attitude. A gradual upward trend has definitely started."

## The Big Picture

Between 1971 and 1981 Canada's population grew by 2,774,870. When the census takers came around on a June day in 1981, there were 24,343,181 Canadians from sea to shining sea. (By June 1983 there were 24,889,800.)

This was not quite as many as expected. The percentage of growth, 12.9, was the second lowest in this century. The slowest rate, 10.9, came during the decade of the Great Depression when immigration was low and young people couldn't afford to start families. The highest, 30.2, was in the decade after World War II, 1951-1961, when immigrants poured in and couples could and did have kids.

Canada is still a large place with relatively few people, and its growth is still substantially higher than most of the crowded western world's. It grew only slightly faster than the United States, where the rate was 11.4 per cent, but considerably faster than France, 5.3 per cent, and Great Britain, 0.3. On the other hand, it was far behind Australia, another spacious country, where the rate was 16.5.

The growth pattern changed from province to

province. All the provinces and the two territories gained people through natural increases and immigration but only a few by attracting Canadians from other places. Alberta's population grew by 37.5 per cent, 197,650 men, women and children; and British Columbia's by 25.6, adding 110,935, reflecting the fact that native-born Canadians as well as immigrants seemed to be going to the far West. Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the most eastern of the Prairie Provinces, grew only 3.8 and 4.5 per cent.

Ontario, which grew 12 per cent, was close to the national average, but it lost 126,760 people to Alberta. Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick grew by 9.7 per cent; Newfoundland, 8.7; Nova Scotia, 7.4; and Quebec, which lost 12 per cent of its Anglophones, 106,310 people, in five years, grew 6.8 per cent.

The Yukon and the Northwest Territories began the decade with a small base, and though they registered spectacular gains in percentages, 29.9 and 31.4, their populations remained relatively tiny.

When the population shifts, power shifts too. The provinces' representation in the House of Commons reflects their share of the total population. The Atlantic Provinces slipped significantly in their relative standings. Ontario — the dominant province since Confederation — peaked in 1971, then dropped slightly in 1981.

The big gains were, of course, in Alberta and in British Columbia. This means that when the House is reconstituted Alberta and B.C. will gain more members than the Atlantic Provinces will.

The shifts, though significant, do not suggest that the centre of influence will move to Vancouver or Edmonton soon. Central Canada — Ontario and Quebec — have substantially more than half of the country's people, 61.8 per cent, and if the pattern of the past decade continues they will still have a majority in the year 2000. Nevertheless, the political winds from the West are rising.