

*Government Orders*

proposal and to make objections or present alternatives in an effective manner. In that respect the public participation process is not what it should have been.

The criteria the commissions must use to set the boundaries may have to be rethought. The criteria are quite general and, depending on the approach taken by each commission, the rationale for drawing electoral boundaries can differ considerably from one province to another. That has created a lot of controversy in this process for setting boundaries since 1964.

The continual increase in the number of members in the House of Commons after each census is another issue of some concern. Since Confederation the number of seats in the House of Commons has increased steadily from 181 in 1867 to the current level of 295. All of us have heard the electors express frustration with the constant growth of government, the size of the House of Commons and the cost associated with Parliament. This issue should not be passed over lightly.

The above examples are but a few of the areas that should be thoroughly reviewed by the standing committee. The government has therefore decided to ask the House of Commons to refer the electoral boundaries readjustment process to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for review and to develop improvements to the current procedure.

The standing committee's terms of reference provide that it can bring in a bill respecting the system of readjusting the boundaries of electoral districts.

The committee shall consider the general operation over the past 30 years of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, including the following major issues: whether there should be a continual increase in the number of members in the House of Commons after each census as now provided in section 51 of the Constitution Act; a review of the method of selection of members of the electoral boundaries commissions; a review of the proceedings of the commissions, including whether they ought to make alterations to the boundaries of existing electoral districts wherever possible; and a review of the involvement of the public and of the House of Commons in the work of the commissions.

I may add to that if we make improvements, as this House does in so many other areas in the way we deal with the country, in the way we involve people, then many of the problems we meet in a process such as we have in the last month in this particular domain will be solved. It is incumbent upon all parliamentarians to think of ways to improve public participation, in the ways in which the general public influence such major decisions such as the nature, shape and composition of their constituencies.

• (1110)

This committee is to report no later than December 16, 1994.

Using one of the new procedures adopted by the House when it approved the government's parliamentary reform package at the outset of this Parliament, the committee will be authorized to frame legislation implementing its proposals.

Again there are benchmarks in the new House where we try to convince Canadians and try to show by example that we are serious about the role of individual members, serious about the role of people outside of the ministries doing work as fundamental as preparing legislation. As I said, this will turn out to be a benchmark in the way we redevelop this House and its approach to problems.

This will be the first opportunity for a parliamentary committee to initiate legislation in response to requests submitted by the government. We are following through on our commitment to strengthen the role of members of Parliament in developing legislation.

The redistribution of electoral boundaries is an important matter for the whole country. We are requesting the standing committee to not only study the issue but to develop and recommend legislative measures it feels may be required to solve this problem.

In conclusion, the readjustment of electoral boundaries touches important questions of democratic representation in the House of Commons. Now is the ideal time to have a thorough review of the process undertaken by the House of Commons itself and to hear Canadians from coast to coast through the standing committee. The committee hearings will be public and outside witnesses will be heard.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides):** Mr. Speaker, previous speeches made in this House pointed out the essentially democratic nature of the Bloc Québécois and, in this regard, its willingness to respect the integrity and autonomy of the people it represents in every county of Quebec.

One of our party's basic objectives, particularly in anticipation of Quebec's independence, is to exercise the democratic process as widely as possible.

Today we take this opportunity to support government motion M-10 proposing that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to prepare and bring in a bill respecting the system of readjusting the boundaries of electoral districts.

Our goal in supporting motion M-10 is, as you know, to respect the regional integrity of these communities without hampering the regional decentralization process currently taking place in Quebec.