

that number to decrease to 65,342. The average population of northern Ontario ridings in 1981 was 70,109.

Therefore, within this new framework the amendment that I am proposing will, in effect, accomplish the objectives that people in Ontario would want to have accomplished. That is to say, it will increase, to the full extent, the number of seats that Ontario will have according to population growth. There will be no limit on that. There is also a new provision which will mandate commissions to pay attention to the issue of manageable geographic size. There are two elements which will ensure, in remote northern areas, that there is a fair opportunity for constituencies of geographically manageable sized. Of course, this applies in northern Quebec, northern Ontario and the northern parts of the western provinces as well.

As I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, during the committee's consideration of the Bill I undertook to obtain expert legislation drafting advice with respect to a motion which the committee endorsed but which I felt was defective as to form. I received such advice and Motion No. 6 is the result. I might add that this amendment imposes, for the first time, a duty upon the commissions to consider "community of interest or community of identity" as well as "the geographic size of large, rural or northern districts". I am indebted to my colleague, the Hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday), who participated in the committee debates and supported the concept which is now included in this legislation. The commissions may not evade their responsibility to take such factors into account in redrawing the boundaries.

This is a new and powerful instrument by which Parliament is, in effect, saying that there are very important matters to consider in establishing new constituency boundaries other than those which relate strictly to representation by population within each of the provinces.

We will all watch with great interest, because we are all affected in one way or another, the way in which the commissions carry out their important new duty. I suggest to Hon. Members that, with the help of suggestions from Members on all sides of the House, we have taken a balanced and reasonable approach through which we will accomplish the objectives of limiting the extent of growth of the House of Commons to keep it within a reasonable size. Yet, through the provisions of this Bill we have allowed for full consideration to be given to provinces in which there is growth. For the first time we have addressed, in a very reasonable way, the question of obligating the commissions to consider "community of interest or community of identity". We also addressed the question of manageable geographic size for constituencies in our country, without departing in any substantial way from the currently understood concept of representation by population. This was one concern that was expressed and I believe we have been able to derive creative ways to deal with it, through amendments to this legislation, with the assistance of the committee.

● (1150)

Let me conclude by thanking the members of the committee for the way they conducted themselves in the hearings and for

Representation Act, 1985

the interest which they brought to this particular legislation. I should point out that in dealing with this Bill we used the mechanism for consulting Members of Parliament as much as possible on two different occasions. First, we presented the draft legislation to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections last June to allow the committee members in the preliminary opportunity to consider the legislation before the principle of the Bill was debated. I hope we will continue to use that mechanism with other legislation after we proceed with the amendments to our Standing Orders as a result of reform of the House of Commons.

I hope that device will be used more often to allow parliamentarians from all sides of the House to address the early stages of legislation rather than having to deal with the principle of completed legislation before going to the committee stage. In many cases it is not possible to have an initial study of legislation, but in this case I thought it was appropriate. It is the kind of legislation that certainly recommended itself to study before being brought in in its final form. Again, I thank Hon. Members for their assistance in this pursuit and commend the amendments standing in my name for unanimous acceptance by the House.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the Minister's statement today illustrated some of the problems with the original Bill. Many witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee indicated that Rule 3 was unacceptable and would face many court challenges. That rule would put a cap on the number of seats for provinces like Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia and would only entitle them to half the additional Members to which they would be entitled pursuant to straight representation by population.

I commend the Minister's decision to remove Rule 3 in Clause 2 of the Bill since it would have been subject to court challenges. Essentially, Motion No. 3 standing in my name would have removed Rule 3.

Incidentally, the Speaker did not rule against Motion No. 5 standing in my name. He wanted to hear arguments about it, and unless the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Hnatyshyn) knows something that we do not, Motion No. 5 has not been ruled out of order by the Speaker.

The President of the Privy Council is aware that this procedure, which will require the establishment of new commissions, a total redistribution commission hearing, and advertising and reprocessing through the House, will cost the country some \$5 million or \$6 million. However, all that is required to complete the existing redistribution is a couple of hours of debate to hear the objections to the existing redistribution program.

Furthermore, we do not know the effective date of this Bill. It is like shooting an arrow into the air and wondering where it will fall. It is likely that this redistribution will come into effect in the summer of 1988. If an election is called for the spring of 1988, it will be held according to the existing boundaries. If it is called in the fall of 1988, it will take into account the new boundaries. How does the House Leader