

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the Chair will be permitted a few moments before replying to that. Meanwhile, the debate concerning the objections to the Province of Quebec could commence. At the earliest opportunity perhaps the Chair could set that on the record in order to assist the Hon. Member for Yukon. Are there Hon. Members seeking to be recognized at this point?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I know from talking to some of my colleagues from Quebec that they had not anticipated this. I wonder if we could "prorogue" for five minutes?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Verdun-St. Paul (Mr. Savard) seeks to be recognized. The Chair recognizes him at this point.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Savard (Verdun-Saint Paul): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with this opportunity today to make a few comments on the readjustment of electoral boundaries. On February 17 of this year, I appeared before the Commissioners to submit objections concerning my constituency of Verdun-Saint Paul, which I have represented in the House since 1977. I drew their attention to some minor changes regarding my constituency. My purpose was to draw their attention to these changes that would enable me to maintain proper representation of this constituency in Parliament. I feel the changes are in accordance with the Elections Act, and I earnestly hope that the Commissioners will endorse my recommendations and so keep parishes and communities intact.

The changes I am proposing are aimed solely at maintaining the natural identity of the constituency, and as such, they also meet the population requirements as defined by the Commission. After several meetings with my constituents, I was told by everyone that the Commission definitely had to respect the wishes of the people.

At the meeting on February 17 of this year, a number of Members concerned by the adjustments appeared before the Commission to support these recommendations and provide additional information.

Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to talk about the history of my constituency. The town of Verdun is more than a hundred years old. When the history of Montreal was written, the author may not have had much to say about the history of this very small piece of land. The fact is, that although the land was parcelled out some time ago, it was not developed until much later. Until the beginning of this century, the town of Verdun was a swamp flooded by the St. Lawrence for most of the year.

The present town occupies a narrow strip between the St. Lawrence and the Lachine Canal, and it was not until 1852 that the town began to take shape. Nowadays, Verdun has a very high population density, although there has always been a ban on buildings over three stories high. Only Ile-des-Sœurs

has allowed the construction of modern apartment highrises during the last few years. Within a period of 100 years, Verdun's population has grown from its initial 200 inhabitants to its present number of 80,000, a case that may be unique.

Like all towns, the population of Verdun is made up of members of the working class, led by a middle class elite—relatively speaking—a small aristocracy of upstanding citizens. Today, Verdun has made a name for itself in more than one field, but on the whole, its leaders have been content with modest aspirations. As the town developed, it always kept its identity as a parish. If we are to understand the significance of such statements, I think it is essential to recognize that the attitudes, traditions and habits of communities that develop in an urban environment are fundamentally different from those in rural centres.

It is common knowledge that in smaller centres, there is a trend towards movements, groups and associations that tend to attract people with common interests. This very typical tendency is often due to a very definite desire and motivation to acquire the mechanisms, institutions, tools and means to renew, in some cases, and to improve and develop in others, the community's social, cultural, economic, athletic and other resources. Verdun has 21 churches, including 7 Catholic churches and 14 Protestant churches, the latter representing 7 denominations. Over the years, a school administration has developed with components representing communities that have worked together and developed in the same environment in the course of time.

Economically speaking, Verdun was able to develop its territory by taking advantage of the land available on Île-des-Sœurs and bringing in service industries which provided jobs for local people. The entire community always has direct access to its federal Member of Parliament and the Commission should realize that it must respect the identity of this community and refrain from further enlarging its territory, bearing in mind that part of the territory of Montreal, namely Côte-St. Paul and Ville-Emard, is already part of this federal constituency.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I earnestly hope that constituencies that have objections will be allowed to ask for a new adjustment before the changes proposed by the Commission are accepted, so that we can have a chance to submit the views of our constituents.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I think it is incumbent upon the Chair to explain to the House that as an occupant of the chair I am unable to enter into debate. Even if I were not presently in the chair, the regulations prohibit my expression of any comments during debate.

Since the matter is rather a technical subject, I thought it would be acceptable to the House if some other Hon. Member took up the objection which I raised in reference to my own riding. That being the case and provided the House is agreed, I