

Mr. Stevens: I am very startled that some hon. members think they are representing ridings based on 1971 census figures. That is not correct; they are based on 1961 figures. Following the election of 1968 we began to represent the ridings we now have in this House. The suggestion that we are referring to 1971 figures when we look at our ridings is totally incorrect. I am startled that one hon. member who has already spoken about Ontario redistribution did not even know the elementary facts as to what we are trying to redistribute, namely, our ridings based on the 1961 figures.

The reason I make this statement is that our population figures in Canada have risen from 18,238,000 to 23 million between the years 1961 to 1976, or 26 per cent. That is an increase of almost 5 million. It would be most unfortunate if we were required to fight the next election with our present boundaries which, I emphasize, date back to the 1961 population figures.

There have been tremendous population changes in this country in recent years. I have in mind not only the 26 per cent increase but the tremendous population changes from area to area. I think it would be unfair to the Canadian public to suggest that an earnest attempt to redistribute and update ridings from the 1961 census figures was so irresponsible that the commission report, in the case of Ontario, should be scrapped. It is my belief that the redistribution proposal before us now is a great improvement over the first proposal by the commission. Redistribution which we are now considering is not perfect. But then, what is? Government members seem to want more political input in the matter. I think that would be a dreadfully backward step.

As we know, according to the 1971 census there were 7,703,106 residents of Ontario. This province, accordingly, is entitled to 95 members, seven more than at the present time, when and if this new redistribution goes through; that is, Ontario will have seven more seats, 95 compared to the 88 we have based on the 1961 census figures. In short, when hon. members suggest we should scrap what we have before us today, they are in effect saying they do not want seven more members representing Ontario ridings in this House. That is one of the reasons I suggest it is irresponsible for government members to be so adamantly opposed to the redistribution we are now considering.

Based on that figure of 7,700,000, the riding quotient in Ontario is 81,085. When we provide a variance quotient of 25 per cent, which the commission is required to do, we find that the largest riding in Ontario cannot be larger than 101,356 and the smallest cannot be smaller than 60,814. Under this redistribution, the region of York, the southern part of Simcoe county and the northern part of Durham region are included in six different ridings. In order of 1971 population, these ridings are Markham, Richmond, Vaughan with a population of 84,941, York-Peel with a population of 83,034, Durham West with a population of 77,905, Simcoe South with a population of 72,170, Victoria-Haliburton with a population of 68,743, and Dufferin-Wellington with a population of 66,817. Geographically, the biggest riding is Victoria-Haliburton which stretches for over 100 miles from one corner of the proposed riding to the other. Dufferin-Wellington, the second largest riding in geographical area, is about 70 miles across. Based on the population figures I have given, taking into account the

Electoral Boundaries

relative geographical size of these ridings, I think the commission has done a pretty good job in apportioning the existing ridings.

While most of the people in my area of York-Simcoe appear to be satisfied with the commission's 1976 recommendations, I would point out a concern among the people of the town of Georgina who feel they would have greater affinity with the municipality adjacent to them, that is, if they were included in the northern part of the York region forming part of the proposed riding of York-Peel. To this end I received a letter from the chairman of the education committee of the Georgina chamber of commerce, Mr. Foss, who said:

I would like to bring to your attention a matter which is of grave consequence to the future growth of the township of Georgina; that is, the redistribution of the federal electoral boundaries.

At a general meeting of the membership of the Georgina chamber of commerce, it was unanimously voted that the chamber of commerce strongly oppose this redistribution. Our reasons are as follows:

1. Traditionally, Georgina township has always been York oriented. This York orientation is even more prevalent today and there is every indication that it will always be this way.
2. The majority of our residents "go south" every day to work, many of them to the commercial and industrial areas in York region.
3. We feel that York county hospital is "our hospital" and we look to York regional police for our safety and protection.
4. We have little in common with Brock, Beaverton, Bobcaygeon and Lindsay; indeed there is no public transportation available to the majority of the Victoria-Haliburton areas and little indication that there ever will be.
5. One of the major reasons given for the establishment of regional government in York in January, 1971, was the need for a unified planning process, one that would unite the area municipalities in York in an approved planning program under a regional official plan.

Mr. Foss continued:

We are bound on the north and west by Lake Simcoe, on the south by our sister municipality and our future and destiny are vertically and not laterally inclined.

Therefore, we are imploring you to do everything in your power to include Georgina in the York-Peel electoral riding, as certainly you can see our obvious affinity with your riding rather than our proposed isolation to the north and east.

I am sympathetic to the views expressed in Mr. Foss's letter, but I can also understand the difficulty faced by the commissioners in apportioning these ridings. As I have mentioned, the proposed York-Peel riding in 1971 had a population of 83,034: in 1971 the population of Georgina was 14,299 which, if added to York-Peel, would result in a total population of 97,333. That would make it the largest riding, after redistribution, of any riding now shown in the province of Ontario in the report now before us. Victoria-Haliburton, on the other hand, would be left with 54,444 people which is well below the minimum quotient to which I referred, which is 60,814. In short, I can understand the difficulty of the commission in finalizing the boundaries in our area. The smaller ridings in population, Victoria-Haliburton and Dufferin-Simcoe, are clearly smaller because they cover large geographical areas. On the other hand, the more urban areas have a faster population growth.

● (1640)

The municipalities within the proposed riding of York-Peel increased their population by 8,183 between 1971 and 1974 alone. In 1974, the proposed York-Peel riding had gone