

*The Disabled and the Handicapped*

available, a chance to speak—by saying that I hope we do not talk this motion out. I think we might refer this motion to the appropriate committee for consideration.

At this point, and I am encouraged somewhat by my hon. colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore (Mr. Boyer), I think it would be appropriate to pay tribute to someone who is no longer here in the House today, and I am referring to the former Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, since Canadians have started to talk more and more about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. For the sake of history, I think that those who are listening or would like to listen or those who will be reading what we said, I must repeat that thanks to what some called his stubbornness and others his determination, we have today a Charter that is complete and became so on April 17 of this year when we proclaimed Section 15 which is now an integral part of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I therefore want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our former Prime Minister. I think there is no question of partisanship here, and I hope that very soon the Charter will also apply to the last province that has yet to agree to participate in the process and sign this agreement.

I also wish to congratulate the Chief Electoral Officer, who even before the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms existed had been aware of the problem in Section 168 referred to by the Hon. Member in his motion that in future elections, all polling stations in urban areas be made easily accessible.

There have been changes because the Chief Electoral Officer was already aware of the problem. That is why all ridings were asked to hold advance polls in locations easily accessible for people who would be unable to have easy access to regular polling stations, so that they could exercise their right to vote, which is now part of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Section 3.

I think a word of congratulations to our Chief Electoral Officer is indeed in order, especially since this year, he is celebrating a very special anniversary after years of loyal service for the benefit of all Canadians, whatever their political affiliation.

I would like to say that we are in complete agreement, at least I personally am in complete agreement with what was said, as I mentioned earlier, by my colleague from the New Democratic Party who spoke before and who presented the motion, and especially with what was said by the Hon. Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, when he commented that there must be no discrimination. Anyone who has the right to vote must also be free to exercise that right. This reminds me of Bill C-26, and although I did not take part in the debate this afternoon, there are a number of similarities. We would like to see all people between the ages of 60 and 65, whether they are married, single, divorced or widowed, treated on the same footing.

I think this is real equality and that these are real rights. But I just wanted to say that in passing.

I also think the suggestion, for people with a practical turn of mind . . . and I see the Hon. Member for Gatineau (Mrs. Maily) and the Hon. Member for Argenteuil-Papineau (Mrs. Bourgault). There are people here who may be new to the House but they are practical. And perhaps, as one of our colleagues pointed out this afternoon, we might have trouble finding 70,000 accessible polling stations right away.

Because in some areas, I don't want to oversimplify, but I think that we should use basic common sense. What does basic common sense say? It says not to create unnecessary difficulties, but if the elector should find it impossible to go to the polls, maybe the polls should go to the elector. If the elector who is handicapped goes to a polling station and cannot enter because it is located in a church basement or on a third floor, provisions of the act should make it possible for a ballot box to be made accessible to him or her, in the presence of the representatives of all the parties. Which means that when one uses one's basic common sense, one can always find a reasonable solution to a reasonable problem. These are the few remarks I wanted to make. I was prepared to say a lot more, but time flies, and my distinguished colleague from the Government side, the Hon. Member for Gatineau (Mrs. Maily) has asked me to share my time with one of her colleagues, something I am pleased to do. I want to repeat that I enjoyed the remarks of this new Member of Parliament, I find them quite reasonable, and if only we could work together to reform . . . There are many amendments to be made to the Elections Act, to streamline it as the need arises during an election campaign. I think that we should be able to obtain the result the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) is seeking. Thank you. I conclude to allow my hon. friend to rise.

● (1750)

**Mr. Marc Ferland (Portneuf):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague from Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) for sharing his allotted time with me to give me a chance, for the first time in this House, to speak about a Bill in which I am especially interested, namely one which aims at making polling stations and even public buildings easily accessible to the elderly and the handicapped.

I worked for many years as a draftsman, and I very often had to design public buildings. Fortunately, it has been possible to design easier and more adequate access to such buildings. What I find surprising is that the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia), who is a man of experience, would propose a Bill aimed at correcting a certain inequity towards a particular group of our population, but only a particular group. I represent a rural constituency, and when I think of all the urban polling stations, I have to conclude that, while one inequity will be corrected, another will be created. I cannot