

How can this be achieved? By failing to recognize Quebec, the people of Quebec, as a founding nation, by not recognizing its distinctiveness, by quashing their every demand and legislating to reduce the political weight of Quebecers in Ottawa by increasing the number of members from outside Quebec, members who will vote against Quebec and put Quebec in its place at the first opportunity.

But history has taught us that one does not have to come from outside Quebec to vote with the English Canada majority and against Quebec in particular. We need not think back very far indeed to realize that. I can see it happen regularly since coming to this place. I saw it again with my own two eyes during the vote at report stage, when Liberal members from Quebec ignored Quebecers' wishes and defeated a motion presented by the Bloc Quebecois to ensure that a minimum of 25 per cent of seats in the House of Commons go to Quebec.

Yet, this was a very simple motion and it read as follows: "Notwithstanding the foregoing, when by application of this subsection the number of members to be assigned to the Province of Quebec is less than 25 per cent of the total number of members in the House of Commons, the Chief Electoral Officer shall assign at least 25 per cent of the total number to the Province of Quebec".

Quebec's influence on decisions made in this House will not start to decline in 100 years, but immediately. In the next federal election, Quebec will no longer have the same decision-making influence, it will be smaller. The figures speak for themselves. Our numbers will be reduced, falling below the 25 per cent level of representation we have always had in this House. Never in the history of Quebec have members from Quebec opposed a motion to protect Quebec's legitimate rights, to protect its political weight within the Canadian federation.

What are we, members from Quebec, here for? What have we been elected to do? Every member from Quebec in this House, regardless of political affiliation—whether red, blue, yellow, whatever—was elected by Quebecers to look after Quebec's interests. This motion to ensure a 25 per cent minimum was designed to protect Quebec's interests and that is why we presented it.

We and all these other members have the duty to protect among other things Quebec's political and decision-making influence. The federal government ignored Quebec in this bill. The same way, Quebec will ignore Canada before long. When I see the government and the third party, the Reform Party, hand in hand, joining forces against Quebec, I know it is high time that we pack up and leave.

The Bloc motion would have guaranteed one quarter of the seats to one of the two founding nations of Canada, while also

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complying with the traditional and legitimate requests of Quebecers to preserve minimum political leverage within the Canadian federation. The attitude of the Liberal members is hypocritical. Barely three years ago, these same Liberals defended Quebec's right to 25 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons. Back then, they formed the opposition. It is strange how time changes things sometimes.

Given that attitude, many of the positive aspects of this legislation are eliminated. Members worked hard to come up with a bill designed to improve the whole redistribution process. However, their efforts were vain, since the government ignored some very important recommendations.

Had some specific provisions been included in it, this legislation could have sent an ultimate message to Quebecers. Instead, the government preferred to team up with the Reform Party to once again put Quebec in a vulnerable position. Nevertheless, as I said earlier, there are some positive aspects to this legislation and I will list a few.

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For example, after a decennial census, the changes to the electoral map will be followed by a readjustment five years later, so as to avoid drastic changes in the electoral districts. This is a good change which fulfils a need.

The population of each electoral district will be allowed to vary by more or less 25 per cent from the electoral quota for the province. This is a minimum which, I think, had to be included in the bill.

Provincial commissions will have to hold public hearings before starting their work. Again, this is in response to a legitimate request made by constituents from every riding.

In determining electoral district boundaries, the provincial commissions will have to consider the community of interest, the size of each district, as well as foreseeable geographic changes. In a riding such as Berthier—Montcalm, which I have the honour to represent, the need for such criteria is obvious. Otherwise, we end up with ridings of 50, 52 or 60 municipalities. There has to be at least a certain sense of belonging and the bill ensures that this is the case.

Provincial commissions will have to submit three draft maps and hold new hearings if necessary. Again, this is very good.

As the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup mentioned, something had to be done. I am referring to the member's comments because he put the finger on an extremely important aspect of the issue. He said the following: "It seems to me that it is not simply a question of ensuring adequate mathematical representation but of ensuring adequate representation". These are two very different matters. Equity cannot be measured mathematically. If it could, we would fix the problem