

that reality which distinguishes us from other nations such as the United States.

This is why francophone communities, of which I am a member, want their children to be able to preserve their language in a primarily English-speaking environment. This is also why anglophones in Quebec are concerned by their decreasing numbers and the need to preserve their social, cultural and educational institutions.

[English]

There are real concerns in the daily lives of many Canadians who are members of linguistic minorities. This is the reason why the federal government works with community groups to support their efforts to turn things around and to help them take charge of the development and future of their communities.

It would be hard to imagine promoting the use of English and French across Canada without strongly supporting their every day use in a community context.

It is through education that the federal government has mostly contributed to the development of the minority communities while respecting the fact that matters concerning education are under provincial jurisdiction.

When Canada adopted the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 it took a stand in favour of the rights of minorities, including linguistic rights. Section 23 of the charter guarantees minority official language communities not only the right to education in their language but also the right to manage their own institutions.

These rights have been clarified by two decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada, the Mahé decision and the reference on education rights of Manitoba in March 1993.

As citizens of Canada we must respect those rights. That is why the federal, provincial and territorial governments are co-operating to provide opportunities for English speaking Canadians in Quebec and French speaking Canadians outside Quebec to be educated in their own language and for all Canadians to learn English or French as a second official language.

[Translation]

Moreover, the federal government recently extended the scope of its action to support minority language education.

• (1620)

Indeed, the government adopted special measures to help some provinces set up structures which will allow a minority to manage its schools, as provided by section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and facilitate access, for

francophones outside Quebec, to post-secondary education in French.

This support will help provide young people who belong to linguistic minorities and who are tomorrow's adults an equal opportunity to participate actively in our country's development and prosperity.

In my province, for example, these special measures by the federal government allowed for the setting up of a network comprising three French-language colleges, including the Cité collégiale, here in Ottawa, which is already a resounding success.

The Franco-Ontarian community has been working relentlessly for years to ensure the creation of colleges in certain regions and the success of the Cité collégiale confirms the real need for such institutions.

[English]

The importance of minority language education to minority language communities is obvious. As the B and B commission pointed out, the absence of adequate education prevented these minority communities from contributing fully to Canadian society. Only now are we beginning to reverse the impact of these previous deficiencies.

I belong to the French speaking minority community and I am proud of my origins. Like me, almost 978,000 people living outside Quebec have French as a mother tongue. Furthermore, some 665,000 persons living in Quebec have English as their mother tongue. This is an important segment of the Canadian population. In fact these minority communities are more numerous than the population of several provinces.

Our official language minority communities are spread out across the country. As a fourth generation Franco-Ontarian, I am proud to state that half a million francophones live in Ontario alone. The Acadians form one-third of the population of New Brunswick, Canada's only officially bilingual province. The largest provincial minority of all is the English speaking community in Quebec.

Numerous or not, concentrated or scattered, those communities are important contributors to Canadian society.

[Translation]

The motion before us proposes territorial bilingualism, which is described by Reform Party members as territorial unilingualism, as a new linguistic arrangement in Canada. The Reform Party proposes a form of ethnic cleansing. This territorial solution, which exists in some European countries, may seem attractive at first glance. However, on closer examination, we see that it does not reflect the regional and demographic realities of Canada.