

(Mr. Allmand), that the existence of French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians in all regions of the country constitutes a fundamental characteristic of Canada, a characteristic that Parliament and all provincial legislatures now have a duty to protect thanks to this Accord, and this should, in my opinion, be considered a substantial step forward in the age old struggle waged by Francophones for recognition of their language rights.

As I pointed out in this House on October 1 of last year, representatives of French-speaking groups outside Quebec and supporters of their cause would have liked all governments to be given the role of promoting as well as preserving the fundamental characteristic recognized in this Accord. But we know, as all Honourable Members do, that in spite of the efforts of the Prime Minister of Canada himself, his provincial counterparts could not agree on such an objective. This non-commitment on the part of provincial partners, which I hope is circumstantial and temporary, should not prevent us from proceeding resolutely in that direction with regard to matters and in areas under our jurisdiction. So I am glad to read in the preamble of this legislation that the Canadian government is committed, and I quote:

—to enhancing the vitality and supporting the development of English and French linguistic minority communities, as an integral part of the two official language communities of Canada, and to fostering full recognition and use of English and French in Canadian society;

Moreover, this legislation reflects our government's commitment, and I quote:

—to cooperating with provincial governments and their institutions to support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities, to provide services in both English and French, to respect the constitutional guarantees of minority language educational rights and to enhance opportunities for all to learn both English and French;

[*English*]

It should be understood that the official languages policy of Canada was not intended to force all Canadians to become bilingual. That is important. On the contrary, the policy allows for the majority of Francophones and Anglophones of our country to function on a day-to-day basis in their first official language, and even to remain unilingual if they so desire. However, this policy does require federal authorities, and encourages the provinces and the private sector, to become bilingual with a view to bridging the gap between citizens and communities of both French and English backgrounds.

My own riding of Madawaska—Victoria is 75 per cent Francophone and 25 per cent Anglophone. Unless the public authorities there can serve these communities in their own official languages, there will be chaos, and this is what we are attempting to do.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

And as my colleague, the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations and Leader of the Government in the Senate, senator Lowell Murray, was saying quite appropriately in Quebec City on June 26 of last year, and I quote:

Official Languages Act

Bridges can only be useful if we prevent both banks they link together from crumbling.

Madam Speaker, that is why I consider that in promoting and supporting linguistic communities, a role the government assumes under Bill C-72, we are dealing with one of the most important and essential aspects of our new language policy.

According to that logic, indeed, could we on the one hand force the federal Government to offer its services in both official languages everywhere in the country and, on the other hand, abandon linguistic communities to their fate without protecting them nor promoting their development?

I am also happy the Secretary of State has been given the responsibility of inciting, encouraging and co-ordinating the fulfilment within other federal institutions of that commitment to help official languages communities prosper and develop.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, to point out that the Department of the Secretary of State did not wait for the coming into force of the new Act to show it was interested in honouring that commitment. The national program that was launched last September to create community radio stations for official languages communities is a very good example of the new role the Department of the Secretary of State, and hence the Government, will be able to play in the social, economic and cultural development of those communities.

I hope that program, as other similar measures, will help the representatives of those communities understand that, contrary to what some of them may say, they are not the great losers in the 1987 Constitutional Accord.

Other departments such as Employment and Immigration also prove to be much more open towards the development of our linguistic communities. For instance, this very day and more exactly one hour ago, in Edmonton, in the province of Alberta, the Department of Employment and Immigration signed a contract worth over \$40,000 for personnel replacement and community development training, for a group of nine anglophone organizations in Alberta.

I think we will see other similar initiatives come from this new legislation, and the whole country will benefit.

Madam Speaker, allow me to expand for a moment on the importance of this language policy for the affirmation of the French fact in Canada. The tabling of Bill C-72 is not an isolated and inconsequent move. As I already said, it is part of the whole evolution of the Canadian society, and the result or end-product of more than 20 years of reflection and analysis about official languages.

Consequently, it is not, in its form and content, foreign to the values and concepts put forward by the Canadian Government during 20 years of language policy.

However, when we look at the path followed by our Government, this Bill takes a particular significance. It is consistent with our objectives respecting national reconciliation, social justice and international influence.