

*Government Orders*

I am very proud, on behalf of my party, to say that we support the amendment of the Constitution to enshrine in our constitutional law the equality of the linguistic communities of the anglophones and francophones in the province of New Brunswick.

I do that for two reasons. First of all, the process here is the right process and, second, because of the substance of what we are doing today in terms of New Brunswick. In terms of process, this amendment has come through a long and very open process in the province of New Brunswick.

I can remember years ago speaking with New Brunswick people about the process in that province toward the fight for linguistic equality of the two communities. Away back in July 1981 the New Brunswick legislature passed a law guaranteeing the equality of the two official language communities in that province. In 1982, in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we had section 16 that guarantees the equality of the French and English languages in the province of New Brunswick, making it the only officially bilingual province in this country.

We can go on to 1989 and 1992 when two legislative committees in New Brunswick recommended further constitutional change after extensive public hearings in the province of New Brunswick.

[*Translation*]

This process has been going on for many years. Right here in this House, the language situation in the province of New Brunswick has already been studied.

I very well remember Mr. McKenna two years ago during the Meech Lake crisis. We also had a committee, chaired by the Minister of the Environment and the same proposal was in the Charest report. In June 1990, we also had a resolution in this House to change the Canadian Constitution for New Brunswick. The motion was already before the House then, but unfortunately it was not presented to the members.

I also remember the Beaudoin-Dobbie report very well. It was supported by every political party in Canada. We also supported the proposal on New Brunswick in the Beaudoin-Dobbie report. Later, we had the Charlottetown accord.

Despite the result of the referendum on that accord, the Charlottetown proposal received very strong support in New Brunswick, both from anglophones and from francophones. If I remember correctly, over 60 per cent of the people in New Brunswick supported the Charlottetown agreement. Again, the New Brunswick proposal was included in this agreement, Madam Speaker. It was supported by the people, by the provincial government members and by the members from the three major parties represented in this House.

On Friday, December 4, the resolution was introduced and adopted by the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly in Fredericton. It was supported by the McKenna Liberal Party, by the Conservative Party as well as by the hon. member and leader of the other party at the Legislative Assembly, Elizabeth Weir.

I would like to say a few words about Mr. Hatfield. He was the premier of that province for many years and he fought hard for linguistic equality in New Brunswick. He has accomplished many positive things for the Acadians as well as for the other people of the province.

I can also remember another former premier, Mr. Robichaud, a Liberal premier, who has done exactly the same thing for New Brunswick. The other party has always been quite small in that province, but nonetheless present, as exemplified by Elizabeth Weir last week, at the Legislative Assembly.

[*English*]

For all kinds of reasons of process what we are doing today is the right thing. This has been studied by people in New Brunswick, by committees in that province and by federal committees for the last number of years. It has been before the House previously. It was part of the companion resolution of Mr. McKenna back in 1990. It was part of the Charest report and part of the Beaudoin-Dobbie report. It was supported by all political parties as the right and proper thing to do.

Last Friday the legislature passed it, supported by the three national parties in the province of New Brunswick. They have now asked the federal Parliament, the Senate and the House of Commons, to pass the resolution as