

quarters by the same response. I would like to spend just a few moments on this area.

**Mr. Blenkarn:** Tell us about property rights.

**Mr. Chénier:** The poor hon. member has his mind stuck on property rights tonight. He seems to have a problem with it.

**Mr. Blenkarn:** Do you not think anyone has the right to property?

**An hon. Member:** Quiet, it's past curfew time at the city pound.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Chénier:** During the public hearings, Mr. Speaker, there was a tremendous openness of mind and heart and one group after another as well as one individual after another expressed not only their tolerance but also their understanding of the unique character of our country. Their testimony will be the basis of the Canada Act. The vast majority of those who appeared before the committee expressed support for sections 16 to 23 on official languages, language of communication with the federal government and certain provincial governments, and I repeat, certain provincial governments, language of instruction, and language to be used in court proceedings and in government documents.

At least 12 groups and individuals, besides the ACFO and the FFHQ, spoke of language and strongly suggested that Section 133 of the BNA Act be extended to Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the Council of Quebec Minorities, the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Italian-Canadian National Congress, among others, and also, of course, the Commissioner of Official Languages have one by one argued that Ontario should grant its French speaking minority the language rights it has been asking for so long.

I am both saddened and disappointed by the fact that Ontario does not officially recognize bilingualism in the province. It seems to me that now is the right time, and I find it unfortunate that Ontario has not yet reached the maturity that Canada in general has demonstrated since the Official Languages Act was enacted.

Mr. Speaker, it has been over 100 years now that language rights for French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians in Quebec and Manitoba were entrenched in the British North America Act. After 114 years, the new Canada Act will confirm that status quo in terms of languages, and will guarantee new equal linguistic rights to the citizens of New Brunswick. That is all! After so many years of evolution and progress, the most important francophone minority outside Quebec, the Ontario francophones, will still not have managed to see their rights protected.

*The Constitution*

I am disappointed, Mr. Speaker, with the attitude of the government of my province. Still, I accept that the federal government should not impose official bilingualism on that province: that is not part of our government's approach. Despite my deeply felt disappointment, I fail to understand the lack of popular support for our efforts and those of national and provincial groups who have pleaded the case for a bilingual Ontario.

In my riding, for instance, 43 per cent of the people are French speaking and live in large numbers in seven main communities. Still, representations were made to me only once in favour of enshrining the linguistic rights of our minority, and even in that instance the representations were almost anonymous in that they were just signed "a group of concerned citizens."

That lack of enthusiasm saddens me, Mr. Speaker, because there can be no better time for claiming our rights. Even now, it is not too late to do so; otherwise, the francophone minority of the riding of Timmins-Chapleau will have missed a unique and historical occasion of ensuring that the rights of their children are protected.

We must not forget that once these rights are entrenched in a truly Canadian Constitution, no new provincial government can take them away from us. In my opinion, popular support for a bilingual Ontario has still to be assessed. The results of the poll which appeared on February 28 in the *Toronto Star* showed that at least 52 per cent of the people in Ontario would accept institutional bilingualism in my province. Premier Davis and his Conservative supporters therefore have no longer any reason to hide behind the argument that such a policy is not agreeable to a majority of the voters.

I believe that we, the members of the francophone minority who are scattered throughout Ontario, will find it hard to live with our lack of pride if we do not make an effort in the next few weeks to urge the Ontario population to indicate to Mr. Davis the urgent need to entrench once and for all our linguistic rights in the new Canadian Constitution. I invite my colleagues—

● (2100)

[*English*]

**Mr. Blenkarn:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether the hon. member would permit a question; perhaps after his speech?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Would the parliamentary secretary accept a question?

**Mr. Chénier:** I would like to complete my speech, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

I invite my colleagues the hon. members from Ontario, whatever their party, to show Premier Davis their support for our rights. It seems that Mr. Davis is the one who needs to be