

National Capital

representatives, or in some cases provincial authorities. The federal agencies did not make submissions on the regional plan until after it was developed on the Ontario side. Subsequently, the federal government made some blunt interventions.

Unilateral action on the part of the federal government without full, prior consultation is no longer acceptable. Sometimes the feeling exists that appointed bureaucrats have more power than elected representatives. People, through their elected representatives in this area, must have some say in the future. I was particularly intrigued by the support of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre in this regard. Negotiations which are conducted privately amongst administrators at different levels of government must become public negotiations in which the residents of the area have a direct say in what is going on, so that they in fact know what is going on. How this is to be achieved will be a major responsibility to be examined by this committee.

● (1630)

This region, as many have said, is unique in that it is the capital of Canada. It must continue to reflect the cultural heritage of all our founding cultures as well as the two official languages. It must be a place where all Canadians can feel comfortable. It must continue to be a showplace to the world of Canadians from many cultural heritages living and working together in harmony. The federal government, in my opinion, should be free to suggest innovations in urban policies for the national capital which would be of interest to all Canadians. The region could be used for pilot projects in areas such as water pollution, public transit and new, satellite cities.

I am reminded particularly of the job done by the national and municipal governments in London, England, which had a much worse pollution problem in the Thames River. In fact, many people said it could never be cleaned up. About 12 years ago nothing lived in the Thames River; then the governments got together and said, "Let's make the clean-up of the Thames a demonstration to the world." A recent survey shows that 66 species of fish are now living in this river. I think, this is an excellent example of the kind of positive project that can go ahead when different levels of government are working with each other rather than at cross-purposes. This is the kind of co-operation that must be assured in any future form of government for the national capital region.

Some people argue that the federal and provincial governments have the constitutional power to impose any form of government they choose. In a legal sense, this is so, but I would hope they would not act this way. A major purpose of this committee is to open up a dialogue with the people of this region and the people of Canada and to ask everybody, "What kind of national capital do you want?" I have already done this in a limited way with the constituents of Ottawa West and propose to continue doing so. The 36,808 households of Ottawa West were sent a questionnaire asking what kind of government they wanted for this region in the future. About 9 per cent responded. The questions were based on the much publicized, two-volume Fullerton report entitled "Governing Canada's Capital" released last fall. I enclosed a one-page resumé of Mr. Fullerton's findings to aid constituents in

answering the questionnaire. Some of the answers showed a very good knowledge of the complex relationship between elected local and provincial governments and the National Capital Commission as well as several federal departments of government.

The core of Mr. Fullerton's recommendations, namely, a proposed supracouncil with representation both elected and appointed from both sides of the Ottawa River, was rejected by almost two-thirds of respondents; only 34.2 per cent agreed with this proposal. Over 75 per cent rejected the idea of a federal district similar to that in Washington, D.C., which has proved so cumbersome and ineffective for dealing with the vital day to day concerns of residents. Only 23 per cent agreed with this suggestion. The largest group, 42.6 per cent want to leave things basically the way they are. An overwhelming 88 per cent of respondents want to continue electing their local representatives.

People want to make sure they have a voice in local government by electing councillors. They want to be able to throw the person out of office if he or she does not do the job; they do not want to be ruled by a faceless bureaucracy or a committee of MPs from all across Canada who are unfamiliar with local concerns. In the closest result, almost half favoured having some appointed federal and provincial officials on a new council, while 46 per cent disagreed and 4 per cent were undecided. This is the first survey of this type done in the Ottawa area since Douglas Fullerton released his report in the fall of 1974. The results of this survey indicate to me there is no clear consensus on the future form of local government for this region; the core of Mr. Fullerton's proposal was rejected in the replies.

This committee has a major job to do. Voters in this area are less than satisfied with the existing structure and are prepared to look at a wide choice of alternatives with open minds. Almost 50 per cent of the questionnaires returned had comments written on them which were quite useful. In addition, I received over 50 letters and briefs which I am prepared to make available to the committee. Also, I have had communication with university professors and citizens groups and it was suggested that they prepare briefs for submission to the special joint committee to be set up by today's motion.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, that this will be a joint committee with representatives from the Senate of Canada. MPs may come and MPs may go, but senators stay to the age of 75 years. We look to them to provide continuity in the study of our national capital, just in case this committee, however competent and however hard-working its members may be, leaves a few tasks still not finished when it discharges its terms of reference.

May I say that I have been most pleased with the interest expressed by opposition members and senators, and with the lack of political partisanship in approaching the issues. The integrity and competence of many who expressed their interest is most reassuring to members who, like me, have the honour of representing the national capital in this House.

[Translation]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on the minister's motion which is