

Government Orders

[English]

Alliance Quebec said in respect of precisely that initiative, Alliance Quebec representing effectively and well the interests of the English-speaking minority in the province of Quebec, and I quote:

—the legislation adopted by the House of Commons represents a significant act of leadership by the federal government—We particularly welcome the Government of Canada's eloquent commitment, contained in the preamble of Bill C-72: "—to enhancing the vitality and supporting the development of English and French linguistic minority communities—".

[Translation]

The *Fédération des francophones hors Québec* said:

We support this new and improved legislation which is a very important development tool for francophones outside Quebec.

The House of Commons of Canada and the three main parties that sit here in the House have been presented with a problem; they have dealt with a solid major piece of legislation, which was endorsed by almost all hon. members. This is to the credit of the House and all hon. members who sit there.

[English]

The federal government has been active over the past years in promoting linguistic minorities. We give considerable financial help to provincial governments to provide minority language education and second language education training and facilities. We assist provinces to make possible a wide, indeed a vast range and array of other provincial services to minority language communities.

• (1600)

In 1988, for example, we signed agreements with the Saskatchewan government to give the Fransaskois greater control over the education of their children.

We entered into an agreement with Prince Edward Island on services in French, and another on a school and community centre in Charlottetown.

We concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with Nova Scotia on the College de l'Acadie.

We reached agreements with New Brunswick on school community centres which provide a focal point for the education and cultural activities of the minority community.

We arrived at a framework agreement with Ontario on the promotion of official languages. In 1989, we signed an agreement with Ontario on a Francophone college network, something that the French-speaking Canadians in the province of Ontario had requested for decades.

In co-operation with the government of the province of Ontario I was delighted that this Parliament and this government were able to finally meet an historic need which helps build Canadian unity and which represents the very best elements of our society which must be encouraged if Canadian unity is going to be strengthened.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: We concluded an agreement with the Yukon on French language services.

We entered into an agreement with the province of Quebec, a very important and substantial agreement, on the provision of health and social services to the English-speaking population of that province. On February 2, this year, we signed an agreement with Quebec on official languages and education.

As one can see, there is symmetry and there is balance. There is fairness. There is not a double standard by this Parliament in respect of the application of bilingualism, or in the application of the official languages law. There are imperfections, obviously. But each and every member of this House seeks to eliminate and minimize those imperfections and from time to time as we proceed with improvements and amendments we make it better. When we make it better, we make life a little better for minority communities across Canada.

That, surely, is the principal objective of a sensitive and thoughtful approach to bilingualism and to the fundamental rights and values of minority language communities across this country. They must be able to turn to the Parliament of Canada when in moments of difficulty; and the Parliament of Canada should be able to respond with as much generosity and leadership as this country is capable of.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, while we have made important progress over the years to uphold this fundamental characteristic of our nationhood, our history has