

*Constitution Act, 1867*

in the national capital or elsewhere in the riding, that I am determined to represent them and serve them to the best of my abilities.

I would also like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to give you briefly some background on my riding of Pontiac-Gatineau-Labelle. This riding is a large rural area, made up of some 60 townships and villages and two small towns, Maniwaki and Mont-Laurier. It extends from the Ottawa River to the west, to the city of Hull to the south, and includes the Upper Gatineau Valley and the Lièvre Valley. The Gatineau Park, a federal property, managed and maintained by the National Capital Commission, and the Parc de la Vérendrye, a provincial park, are also in this riding.

Seventy three per cent of the population, is French-speaking and 27 per cent English-speaking. This riding is therefore a good reflection of the various cultures in Canada since it also has an ethnic and native element.

The main industries in this area are farming, tourism and forests.

Unemployment insurance and job creation are of particular concern to me, just as they are for my colleagues, since my constituency is a disadvantaged one as Canadians could realize by watching "The Fifth Estate" program of the CBC network on November 20 1984. For the time being, the creation of a federal district is not a real preoccupation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to oppose Bill C-207 moved by my friend, the Hon. Member for Hull-Aylmer (Mr. Isabelle), which would amend section 16 of the Constitution Act, 1867, since part of my riding is included in the national capital region. The new section 16 would read: "It is hereby declared that the national capital of Canada and the seat of the federal government of Canada shall consist of the city of Ottawa, in the Province of Ontario, and the city of Hull, in the Province of Quebec, and also of such surrounding area as prescribed from time to time by the Parliament of Canada." Mr. Speaker, this bill would change the limits of the national capital of Canada so as to include the city of Hull as well as any other area prescribed from time to time by the Parliament of Canada.

● (1620)

*[English]*

In mid-1975 a joint Senate-Commons Committee on the National Capital Region was formed to study the recommendations of the Fullerton report in order to find a way to govern an approximate 1,800 square-mile area under the joint jurisdiction of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, the federal Government, approximately 50 local councils, and two regional governments.

Right from the beginning of this investigation into the possibility of making the National Capital Commission into a federal district somewhat like Washington in the District of Columbia, the committee ran into problems. The two Prov-

inces of Ontario and Quebec did not want to enter into discussions that would have the effect of mapping the region's future.

Many committee meetings were held to study, among other things, briefs presented by municipalities from the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario. The participants at these meetings knew what they did not want, but nothing constructive was put forward. Not even an interim report was produced as a result of this committee's work, because of the confrontation of national objectives versus local concerns. It is a confrontation which has been a trademark of the previous administration.

Let me quote an article that appeared in *The Citizen* on November 11, 1977. It reads:

The municipalities wanted complete control of planning, while the NCC maintained that "the national interest in the capital region is larger than the sum of the local, regional and provincial interests."

The same article concluded that this committee should not be re-established unless all parties concerned participate actively and seriously and send serious representations. To my knowledge, the consensus of the two provinces, the municipalities concerned and the regional governments has not yet been obtained.

*[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, can we allow discussions on this bill? Are we going to reinstate a committee to address the issue? Let us take into account the present economic situation of our country which is faced with an enormous deficit. In view of the current economic situation, can we afford to foot the bill for what the change proposed in this bill would entail?

What would be the total expenditures needed for such a proposal?

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I should like to repeat what my colleague the Hon. Member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick) said in this House on January 20, 1984 when dealing with the Riel Committee which was created either in 1965 or 1966, and I quote:

It wanted Ottawa and the surrounding area to be taken out of the Province of Ontario and the Hull and Gatineau area taken out of the Province of Quebec, and something like an eleventh province set up, a truly different area apart from Quebec or Ontario which would be the capital territory as they have in Washington, D.C. or in Canberra, Australia.

My colleague acknowledged at that time that this project would pose numerous difficulties. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the problems would be numerous and, above all, it would be costly. My friend, the Hon. Member for Hull-Aylmer (Mr. Isabelle), proposed the following in an interview given to the *Le Droit* newspaper in September, 1982:

I would see the creation of a federal district administrated by a tripartite commission comprised of the Federal government, the government of Quebec and the government of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that the creation of such a commission would represent a major investment for Canada and this is a luxury we cannot afford in the present state of the economy. It is not a priority of this Government.