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long a period of time caused racism to be perpetuated in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, I must admit I do not find the subject we are discussing today very congenial, and I am referring to intolerance and prejudice.

A Quebecer by birth and a Franco-Ontarian by choice, I had the great privilege of learning both official languages of our country at a very young age: French of course, since both my parents were Francophones, and English because of the environment in which I grew up.

Madam Speaker, discrimination, prejudice and intolerance are like so many diseases that plague our society, and if no remedies are forthcoming, the consequences may be not only unpleasant and distressing but even devastating for our country. I am thinking, for instance, of Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland, where we see how intolerance can destroy every vestige of human dignity.

Earlier this week, Madam Speaker, municipal authorities in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, passed a resolution declaring their municipality officially unilingual English, of course.

The city council took this step on the basis of a petition signed by several thousand residents of Sault Ste. Marie. Why? Are the vast majority of Sault Ste. Marie residents bigots? Probably not. Are their elected municipal representatives racists? I hope not. I would rather think they were misled, that they made a serious mistake. Inexcusable, if you wish, but still a mistake.

Last fall, Ontario's Bill 8 came into force. Under this legislation, the province guaranteed Franco-Ontarians living in certain designated areas access to services in French. I am of course referring to provincial services. A municipality may offer services in French and even declare itself bilingual, but it certainly has no legal obligation to do so. So why should it declare itself officially unilingual?

[*English*]

Madam Speaker, a small group of individuals, with their own agenda, are trying to have these resolutions adopted by certain municipal councils in Ontario, stating that bilingualism is something that municipalities cannot

afford, and in alleged retaliation for Quebec's Bill 178, which forbids English outdoor signs.

As I said previously, no municipality is forced or in any way compelled to offer French language services in Ontario, even though, in my view, many of them should.

In regard to Bill 178, two wrongs, of course, do not make a right. But it should be noted that the services offered to English speaking residents of Quebec are by and large far superior to those offered to franco Ontarians.

What is most disturbing to me is the message that this kind of declaration sends. Let me try and draw a parallel or two for you, Madam Speaker, and for our colleagues in this House.

If a municipality did not participate in programs to promote racial equality, could it then, using the same logic, declare itself uni-racial? Hopefully not. If a corporation, or a municipality, or anyone else, failed to provide facilities for the disabled, or failed to hire disabled individuals, could it then advertise itself as a disabled-free zone, or any other such name? Again, the answer is no, of course.

Similarly, a municipality or corporation that does not offer French language services certainly need not call itself officially unilingual. The fact that it does not offer these services to its minority, particularly when the minority is composed of a large group of individuals, is unfortunate enough in itself.

To advertise it, in my opinion, constitutes an insult, not only to that minority, even though that is true as well, but to all members of minority groups right across this great country.

The linguistic duality of Canada has been recognized consistently from the Quebec Act of 1774. The fact that Canadians in significant numbers possess an ability to speak one or even both of our official languages represents an immense wealth to our citizens and to our country as a whole. It is a richness worth preserving and worth cherishing.

I call upon all my colleagues in the federal, provincial and municipal office to resist falling into any trap such as this one that divides Canada. Let our country be a land of tolerance where Canadians will feel free and will feel