

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to rise this afternoon to speak on a matter that seems to be only a technical consideration of figures. However, basically, it is an opportunity to show Quebecers how the rest of Canada envisions Quebec.

• (1720)

My hon. colleague opposite mentioned a moment ago that since the Bloc Québécois sanctions Quebec's sovereignist agenda, we should not give too much importance to the readjustment of electoral boundaries since Quebec will have ceased to exist as a province within a few months. He is perfectly right. If there is something which does not motivate me to speak too long, it is certainly the rearrangement of an electoral map including Quebec, because I fervently hope that sovereignty will be proclaimed very soon. But it is a good opportunity to show Quebecers what the rest of Canada thinks of the role of Quebec in the Canadian confederation.

Giving Quebec 25 per cent of the seats is more or less proportionate to what we pay in taxes. There is an old maxim that says "No taxation without representation". Let us go back in time to see how we have been treated since the conquest of Quebec, or New France, by England.

It must be realized that some 250 years ago, this territory was totally owned by New France. We had families, we spoke French, and economic, social and cultural activities were all conducted in French. Then came the conquest. It did not simply transfer custody over the country from the King of France to the King of England. It also brought forth assimilation dynamics which caused the territory to be separated between Upper Canada and Lower Canada a hundred years later.

We must not forget that at the time, the economic situation was critical in Upper Canada whereas it was very comfortable in Lower Canada, Quebec in other words. The Union was essentially a means for Quebec and its sound economy to help finance Upper Canada where the economic situation was rather on the slow. And the federal government did not stop there. To finance wars which were continually breaking out, it introduced taxes to get even more money. Was that money put to good use for Quebec and Quebecers? Just looking at the way investments were made tells us that it is not the case.

Why are decisions made the way they are? Simply because Quebec no longer carries any political weight. If we have only 25 per cent of the seats, it means that we are losing 75 per cent of the political power. It is easy to understand that the sovereignist agenda would finally give back to Quebec 100 per cent of all the powers required to ensure its own viability, protect its economy and take on its role on the world scene.

Today, we have the opportunity to show that even with 25 per cent, which is exactly what Quebec has been requesting all along, even with 25 per cent, we face opposition from the government.

I ask all Quebecers: Is it worth staying within a Confederation when common sense requires that we get what we are entitled to according to historical rights, and that raises objections and eyebrows? I am thoroughly convinced that I could have explained all of this to empty benches and that the government's position would have been the same.

• (1725)

I hope this will make Quebecers understand that there is no alternative to the historical decision we must make. There is only one solution, the one that will give us 100 per cent of our powers and not limit us to a mere 25 per cent or even less.

Ms. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am obviously very happy to be part of this debate. The reason of the amendment proposed by the Bloc Québécois is that Quebec be guaranteed by Canada a minimum of 25 per cent of the total number of members in the future. I think that many arguments have been put forward and I think it is very important to be aware that we are going through a significant moment of our lives.

We have asked on several issues in the past for a sign that would allow Quebec to try and understand or see if Canada truly wants a Quebec that stands up within Canada. It is not in the interest of Canada to have a weak Quebec but rather a strong Quebec which will be able to keep its representativeness, because Quebec is a nation. It is a people, a founding people.

In 1982, Canada undertook a societal project that denied Quebec its distinctiveness and said that henceforth there was only one national identity in this country. This society project treats all ten provinces on an equal footing. As a founding people, as my colleague just said so eloquently a moment ago, francophones were present on the whole territory and even further down to the south since they were even to be found in Louisiana, and when each of the provinces joined the Confederation, francophones formed a majority almost everywhere.

The population in Quebec also experienced significant growth, but if we analyze the immigration policy of Canada we will see that Canada has deliberately increased Ontario's population by immigration and it has anglicized this country. This was a deliberate decision on the part of the government. We are asking for a concession from this country that wants to keep us all together. Everyone says that Canada is much better off with Quebec. If that is true, make some concessions. Give us the minimum we are asking for, which is 25 per cent of the representativeness. That is all we are asking.