

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Surely, Mr. Speaker, you have noticed the irregularity, the fact that I share the view of my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary who represents the constituency of LaSalle (Mr. Lanthier).

Indeed I fully agree with what he has just said: the name "Nouvelle-Écosse" is part of our history.

I should tell the House that I do have some credibility because I married a Nova Scotia woman and I consider that province as our second home.

I am quite surprised that our colleague the Hon. Member for Annapolis Valley—Hants (Mr. Nowlan) should have introduced this kind of legislative amendment. It is with some surprise as well that I notice he is not in the House to—

Mr. Lanthier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Lanthier) on a point of order.

Mr. Lanthier: Mr. Speaker, although I do not have as much experience as the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston), I believe it is unacceptable to mention a colleague's absence from the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary is quite right. Incidentally, I would point out to him that he should say "rappel au Règlement" rather than "point d'ordre". The Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston).

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, he is quite right. As I recall, he did the same thing himself five minutes ago.

Therefore—

● (1740)

[English]

I do not intend to continue this debate at any great length. I was surprised that an Hon. Member from Nova Scotia would make this proposal to change the French version of the name of that province.

I must say I take issue with one comment made by my friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Lanthier), namely, that the preceding Government had been insensitive to the aspirations of the provinces. On the other hand, this Government has to recognize that the very private Private Member's Bill that we have before us is being debated on the initiative of a Conservative Member of long standing. In my time in the House, I do not recall any such proposal coming from the Government of which I was then a member.

I would be interested in reading the interventions of some of the other Hon. Members of the House of Commons who are from Nova Scotia and find themselves on the Government

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benches if they have already made interventions. I see that the distinguished Hon. Member for Dartmouth—Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) is here today. I have not had the opportunity of discussing this particular Bill with him. Once again, in my judgment, it is totally inappropriate for a Private Member's Bill to raise an issue which is so important to so many people.

[Translation]

Our friend from LaSalle (Mr. Lanthier) mentioned the importance of the Acadian community in Nova Scotia. Imagine the attitude of this community, where I know quite a few members. Many are involved in provincial politics in Nova Scotia. Imagine their reaction to changing the name of the beautiful province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that for us, at least for me because after all this is a Private Member's Bill, what our hon. friend from Annapolis Valley—Hants (Mr. Nowlan) is suggesting is entirely unacceptable.

Mr. Geoff Scott (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State of Canada): The Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographic Names, the CPCGN, has for many years held the principle that, aside from entities that come under federal jurisdiction, such as Indian reserves, national parks and military bases, geographical names fall under provincial jurisdiction. The name of a province is of course another problem altogether. According to the Department of Justice, the name of a province is the name appearing in the Act under which the province entered Confederation. In the case of Nova Scotia, this was the British North America Act. Since these are constitutional documents, the federal Government cannot proceed with any changes without having such changes ratified by the provinces. Furthermore, the provinces cannot change their names without requesting the approval of the federal Government. I think we can conclude this is an area of shared jurisdiction, where it would be up to the provincial Parliament to take the initiative.

Mr. Speaker, in toponymy, current and past usage is one of the main elements to be taken into consideration. The name "Nouvelle-Écosse" as used on maps, in treaties, in historical works and in geographic documents goes back to the eighteenth century at least. Its use has been maintained without interruption since that time, and the name remains in common usage, not only among French-speaking Nova Scotians and all French-speaking Canadians but also throughout the French-speaking world. It is the name we find in the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, under which France formally ceded Nova Scotia to Great Britain.

We must remember that, initially colonized by France under the name "Acadie", Nova Scotia was French from 1667 to 1710. Furthermore, even if the name Nova Scotia is of Latin origin, it has been a very long time since it was perceived as such by the population of that province and Canadians in general, who consider it to be the English name of a province with a strong English-speaking majority.