

Supply

together to bring about acceptance of the need and the recognition that Canadians speak more than one language.

The French and the English go back a long way to 1608 when Samuel de Champlain first landed in this country. At times the French language dominated and the English language has dominated at times. It has see-sawed back and forth and through the accidents of history the English language now dominates. However, we recognize the rights of the French speaking people in this land. We want them to be recognized. We want to ensure that they have a place in Canada.

We want to ensure that the Official Languages Act is changed so that when we have another election there will no longer be 54 people sitting in the House who are dedicated to breaking up the country. We want 295 people in this House who are committed to working together and staying together.

The Reform Party has addressed the problem and it has said, let us go back to the commission that was formed in the 1960s which reported that we should have territorial bilingualism. Obviously the personal style of bilingualism does not work which is why we have these 54 people here today.

Let us recognize that we should change the system in order for it to work better. We want the French to speak in their own language, we want the English to speak in their own language. We do not want to shove another language down people's throats if they do not want it. That is what generates the backlash.

We should also try and defuse language as an issue. From 1867 to 1969 there were virtually no language laws in this country. We have to get back to the recognition that the fewer laws we have in this field the better and the more harmony and desire we have to make it work the better. That is why as Reformers we propose that language become a provincial issue rather than a federal one. Let each province decide which language is going to be spoken in the province, bearing in mind that each must account and accommodate the language where population warrants, that it be French, English or both.

That is why we put this motion today, to elevate the need to talk about this before the 54 Bloc Quebecois get their agenda on track and march right out of here.

If the 54 Bloc Quebecois members take Quebec out of this country they have left behind the thousands of French speaking Canadians in the rest of the provinces. They will be left hanging high and dry with absolutely no support. They will be alienated from the people in Quebec. The Bloc will be doing these people a great disservice. That is why I say to these people, work toward making federalism work rather than packing a bag and leaving.

We have invested a great deal of money over the years. Even Mr. Spicer, the first language commissioner said that perhaps we should add it all up and find out how much we are talking about and what it costs us. He said:

But surely there is merit in keeping more meaningful accounts. Without them, those dealing language reform will have to continue waffling under the recurring question of costs—hearing but being unable to contradict convincingly such deliciously polemical estimates—as “three billion dollars a year for bilingualism.” It would seem more sensible to pull the whole lot of linguistic items together, specify the purpose of each, tote up the terrifying sum, add on ten per cent for indirect or integrated costs, then publish and defend the thing as a high but necessary price for being Canadian.

● (1340)

That was Mr. Spicer, the first Commissioner of Official Languages quite some number of years ago. Today we have all kinds of numbers being thrown out. How much does it cost, \$2 billion, \$4 billion? We do not know.

We do know we pay \$50 million a year as a bonus to people who speak two languages in the federal civil service whether that is required of their job or not. We know that we spend hundreds of millions of dollars on other aspects, translation, bilingual commissions; \$200 million for education. The cost adds up, but how much? We do not know.

Mr. Spicer said quite some number of years ago: “Let us add it up. Let us find how much. Tell Canadians what it costs us and let that be the price for keeping this country together”.

As I have said many times, the Reform Party wants Canada to stay together. We want a language policy that will bind us together in unity and understanding. The official language policy as it currently stands will not work and must be changed. That is why we brought the item to the forefront today.

Let us sit down and develop a new structure. Let us not adopt the attitude of the Bloc Quebecois and say: “That's it. If you can't tolerate it, go”. Let us tell the Bloc Quebecois not to be selfish and walk out on this great experiment that has been Canada.

We have said to the Leader of the Opposition, and we have said to other members of the Bloc Quebecois: “Let us sit down and define a new federalism”. They said: “No. If a question is to be put on a ballot on a referendum in Quebec it will be a choice of what we have today or separatism”. They have said that they are not interested in sitting down and making this experiment called Canada work. That is tremendously unfortunate for the 27.5 million Canadians—that includes French Canadians—right across this land and the French Canadians in the province of Quebec who want to be in Canada, who want this country to stay together.