

*Constitution Act, 1867*

The purpose of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is simply to amend Section 16—it could be done by order in council—so that the capital region as described in the legislation governing the National Capital Commission. It was adopted in 1957 and describes all cities, towns and villages included in the national capital region.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might give the historical background to the creation of Canada's capital. As we all know, a lot of ground has been covered since the capital was designated in 1957. For starters, let me say that at the very beginning Queen Victoria designated Ottawa as the capital of Canada in 1857. Before that selection was made, the governments of Upper Canada and Lower Canada made various suggestions between 1841 and 1857, so that the capital moved around, from Montreal to Toronto, then to Quebec City and Kingston. But as we remembered the sad experience of 1814, of the Americans, we then realized that Kingston was much too close to the United States, and that it was perhaps better to get deeper inland so that, if the United States ever wanted to invade Canada, things would be more and more difficult.

As to what happened then, and I referred earlier to the Queen's choice, whether Queen Victoria put her finger at random on a point on the map between Upper and Lower Canada, I do not know. And I do not know either whether credit should be given to Lady Head, who at that time was the wife of Canada's Governor General, and had drawn quite an amazing sketch of Parliament Hill that attracted the attention of the Queen who then chose Ottawa as the Capital of Canada. But one thing is sure: the Queen probably never realized that in so doing she had her finger pointing exactly between what is now the Province of Ontario and the Province of Quebec. Certainly, had she realized that Canada's capital would then be located in Ontario, she would have found a way to make sure it would be neither in Ontario nor in Quebec, so as to really be a capital reflecting the aspirations of a country such as Canada.

And from then on, we have had several successive Prime Ministers, both Conservative and Liberal, who all showed an extraordinary desire to accelerate the solving of the existing problem at that time, making this the true capital that would reflect the aspirations of all Canadians.

There was the Holt Commission in 1913, set up by the then Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden. There was something else beside the Holt Commission which was one of the first to deal with the development of the Ottawa-Hull area and vicinity.

Of course, there has been extensive development since that time because it was realized that the community known in the past as Bytown, the City of Ottawa which replaced Bytown, could not be expected to cope with all the needs entailed by the development of a capital, and a commission was set up, the Ottawa Improvement Commission, followed in 1927 by the Federal District Commission which in turn became in 1957 or

1958, if my memory serves me well, the present National Capital Commission.

Many things have happened. And judging by the evolution, the development of the concept of a national capital, the idea of eventually creating what I would call a federal district is gaining ground, because it is not normal, Mr. Speaker, to have the capital of a country like Canada located within one province. This might be arguable, but in all logic, it is inconceivable that a capital like Canada's capital be located within one province. What I say is so true that when the Right Hon. Premier of Ontario comes to Ottawa, he does not say "I am glad to be in Ottawa", but "I am glad to be in Ottawa, the National Capital of Canada". So I think it is for him a way of raising the status of his province and enhancing its prestige, but I would suggest that is not the best way to achieve the goal we have been trying to reach all these years namely Canadian unity, which would be reflected in a place such as the capital of a country.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, if I recently asked the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to establish a committee for the purpose of studying the future organization of the National Capital Commission it is because in the past, due to great changes and development the capital has undergone, committees were formed exactly for the purpose of considering the development of Canada's national capital. And that is why in 1957 a Senate and Commons committee was established to consider the very role that the National Capital Commission would play. That is why today we are able to judge the important evolution that took place between 1927 and 1984. We owe to the National Capital Commission, which in a way is the offspring of the Ottawa Improvement Commission and the Federal District Commission, the capital city we know today.

So, my purpose with this bill is for the National Capital Region to become the National Capital of Canada, including all municipalities within the limits of that region as described by an Act of Parliament; it would be a first step towards the establishment of what many people wish to see, a federal district. Many politicians had hoped for that type of government for the National Capital area. Back in 1906, the Hon. Mr. Fielding, if my memory serves me well, who was then Minister of Finance, decided to have some sort of referendum on the issue which was defeated by only 800 votes. But it did not occur to anyone at the time to poll the people from the other side of the Ottawa River. Now I am sure that if the people on the Quebec side of the river had been asked for their opinion Sir Wilfrid Laurier's great wish would now be fulfilled and Ottawa would be the Washington of the North.

Many concerns were voiced at the time. To create here a new Washington or a new District of Columbia did not seem desirable for the simple reason that it was not considered very democratic not being able to elect a mayor and city councillors. But things have changed a lot since then, and nowadays,