

Government Orders

magnificence that it brings to our citizenship and the pride and the joy that it gives us in being Canadians.

Let us adopt this resolution which speaks to some fundamental values that have been the source of great pride for all Canadians from the very beginning of Canada. Let us adopt this resolution loudly and clearly and, hopefully, with one voice. In the process of doing that we do honour to Canada and we do honour to this House of Commons. Perhaps even more important we do honour to our obligations to each other.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity this debate gives this House to send Canadians a positive message in support of bilingualism in our country.

I think members on both sides of this House understand that there is an urgent need to send a clear and unmistakable message to the country in support of linguistic duality, of bilingualism. Therefore we will support this resolution because, above all, it calls for the reaffirmation of the importance of bilingualism as, what is, and what should be a fundamental characteristic of this country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): In short, I see this resolution as a vehicle which enables parliamentarians of all parties to send this positive message to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

But, Mr. Speaker, it is not enough for us as parliamentarians to pass a motion showing our support for bilingualism to fulfil our duty to promote and encourage bilingualism.

We must show our support for it. And I sincerely hope, as do my colleagues, that the government will not stop with this resolution and that it will launch a dynamic program in its wake to encourage bilingualism. It is up to the Prime Minister and his government to set the tone on this issue.

My predecessor, the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Turner), sounded a warning note a few months ago here in the House. He said

—that if the federal government did not act as soon as possible to promote linguistic equality, there would be serious consequences.

Mr. Speaker, he was right.

[*English*]

I believe that the current wave of English-only municipal resolutions in Ontario has a lot to do with a lack of federal leadership. There is a perception on the part of some Canadians that their federal government is sending out conflicting signals, that it says one thing to people in one part of the country and another thing to people in other parts.

This government must change its *laissez-faire* attitude and become more active in the promotion of bilingualism. If it does not, many people will continue to hold the misconception that bilingualism is just an expensive luxury that this country does not need.

In fact, it is the duty of all of us to work diligently to dispel that myth and to convince Canadians that official language equality is one of this country's most distinctive and positive feature. That misconception, that myth I have just outlined, is not only wrong, it is also dangerous. It is wrong because it denies our history and dangerous because it could deny us our future.

It is dangerous because, if taken to its extreme, it will have us ignore the fundamental nature of this country, namely, that we are a country whose history has given us two languages, English and French, as part of our basic national fabric. If we reject the fundamental nature of this country, then we are rejecting the kind of Canada we have been building here for the past 123 years. A Canada that rejects this principle is not the kind of Canada I want to see in the next decade and the next century for my children and their children.

I believe that if we reject this principle, Canada will not survive as an independent, distinctive and united country. I do not believe a Canada that rejects the principle of language equality is the kind of Canada the majority of Canadians want to see either.

Members will no doubt be aware of a new poll completed by the respected firm Environics Research Group and released today by the Canadian Parents for French. It shows that nearly three-quarters of all Cana-