

*National Capital of Canada*

properly reflected by the objective of Bill C-230. A cursory glance at the bill—of course I have no intention of reading the full text—reveals that essentially it has to do with section 16 of the constitution. If it were repealed, the amendment would read as follows:

It is hereby declared that the national capital of Canada and the seat of the federal government of Canada shall consist of the city of Ottawa, in the province of Ontario, and of the city of Hull, in the province of Quebec, and also of such surrounding area as prescribed from time to time by the Parliament of Canada.

To make everything crystal clear, Mr. Speaker, I would want this new capital to become what is designated as the National Capital Region in an act of Parliament of 1958, which contains a geographical description of the municipalities that are part of the national capital. I believe Parliament enacted that legislation in 1958, thereby creating a Federal District Commission known as the National Capital Commission. The region itself is mostly urban. It includes the city of Ottawa and its suburbs as well as adjacent territories and, on the Hull side, as far as Gatineau and part of the federal ridings of Pontiac and Hull.

Mr. Speaker, let us retrace the history of our national capital. In 1858, Queen Victoria asked that Ottawa be known not as the capital—if memory serves me right, I have not seen the word “capital” in the constitution—but as the seat of government. A linguist I am not, so I would not want to come up with unenlightened definitions of the expressions “capital” and “seat of government”, but I am sure the subject lends itself to debate and especially reflection.

Mr. Speaker, if I refer to Hull, and that is the object of my bill, it is because the various governments we have had since 1899 have always been anxious to have a capital which would reflect the aspirations of Canadians, the unity of our country, its cultures and the duality represented by both peoples of Canada. To my mind, the National Capital Region is the striking example of what Canada is and of what the Canada of tomorrow will be, because I think that no other regions in Canada can generally get along as well as Hull and Ottawa do, although there may be the odd conflict here and there. Indeed they have opted for identical administrative structures, and here I refer to the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Community and the Outaouais Regional Community.

Mr. Speaker, if we examine the past and read history books, we find out that in 1899 the governments realized that the authorities of the city of Ottawa were unable to maintain and improve what was then known as the capital of Canada. That is why they created the Ottawa Improvement Commission which continued in existence until the advent of the Federal District Commission in 1926-27.

● (1710)

We had the Federal District Commission and then the National Capital Commission which, basically, have always aimed at embellishing and protecting the environment of the

national capital. This is so true, Mr. Speaker, that a man who thought big and who had a vision of the future such as perhaps no politician has had since Sir Wilfrid Laurier, decided because of all this inertia, through his minister, the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Fielding, to hold a kind of plebiscite in the federal capital in order to ask the residents whether they would agree to a federal district which would become the Washington of the North. This was the dream of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. A plebiscite was held in 1906, but it was unfortunately defeated by no more than 600 or 800 votes, which means that 45 per cent of the people were in favour of this concept, and I would add that the people in Hull did not vote on this issue for the simple reason that they had not been invited to do so.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, the situation has evolved greatly. We have had the Holt commission, which published its report in 1915, I believe, and which had been created by the Conservative government of Mr. Borden. This commission was made up of six members including the mayors of Ottawa and Hull, who themselves advocated a federal district to administer the Canadian capital. All the successive mayors and elected representatives of Hull have always urged and implored the federal government to extend in some way the national capital on the Hull side.

Even King, in 1927, Mr. Speaker, was in favour of a federal district—and I say this for those who are not aware of it—and Mr. Pearson also advocated a federal district for the Ottawa-Hull region on television in 1964. In 1927, King also had a great vision of the future, and it can be said that the national capital region was always a priority for him. Indeed, one only has to look at what he left in the magnificent Gatineau park to see that the national capital was one of his priorities. He also decided to urge the improvement commission to do something for Hull. The Federal District Commission was created in 1927, and that is when things started to change for the Hull region. However, it took many representations, many pleas and many prayers until finally, around 1968-69, after many studies carried out by joint committees of the Senate and the House of Commons, a consensus was reached at the constitutional conference and the premiers agreed that the Ottawa-Hull region would from then on be known as the National Capital region. Since then, massive investments have been made on the side of Hull, not only to meet the wishes of the population, but also to accomplish what Canadian prime ministers have wanted for the Ottawa-Hull region since 1895.

If it had not been for the First World War, the fire that destroyed the Parliament buildings, the depression and the Second World War, Mr. Speaker, we would now be living in a federal district. Even the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons advocated some type of federal district for the Ottawa-Hull region in its recommendation 47 in 1972, which is not so long ago.