

*Government Orders*

[English]

I have listened to the ideologues of the Bloc Quebecois who would rather tear down than build. I have listened to Reformers who, despite all their loud noises, shouts and grunts, are really the couch potatoes of national unity. They would rather second guess. They would rather criticize than encourage. They would rather watch than participate as they did during the last referendum.

Participation is one of the two issues I should like to talk about for a moment. We have all heard the word participation. Perhaps it is now time to talk about citization. Just as participation is about exercising the body, citization should be about exercising our responsibilities and obligations as citizens of this great country. Good citizenship is not only about sitting on your hands and criticizing, like the third party, but it is also about getting out and doing something.

• (1530)

Good citizenship also means making a difference. At the end of the referendum we witnessed in a very moving and a very powerful way how average Canadians across this land answered that call and defined what citizenship is and should be all about.

I am talking about the unity rally in Montreal. I am talking about the candlelight vigils on the Pacific coast. I am talking about the march by tens of thousands of Canadians across the bridges between Hull and Ottawa. I am talking about the raising of the Canadian flag on Signal Hill in Newfoundland; all of these and many of the other demonstrations where people came together in the sense of collectivity, in the defence of a sense of community and demonstrated their affection not only for their country but for the kind of deep rooted commitment they have to good citizenship from coast to coast to coast.

This is a country of doers and not whiners. This is a nation of home builders and not home wreckers. The October 27 rally in Montreal for me and many others was a day like very few. We shall never forget that day for those who either watched it or participated in it. It was a day when the Canadian family showed what it was all about, considering the jammed buses and trains and planes that created that incredible movement to Montreal.

The Toronto caucus in metropolitan Toronto and area was able to facilitate on two days notice 100 buses of committed Canadians who wanted to do something about this country, about the inability to facilitate any other coach in the Ontario system because they were all gone.

We had to rent buses from Pennsylvania because of the lack of buses in the Ontario system. The Finch West Bakery in my riding, because people were getting up and lining up at four o'clock in the morning to get on one of these coaches, provided croissants and muffins and orange juice as its contribution to this movement.

We have to consider people like John Campion who said: "We cannot go but we would like to fundraise for those who want to go but may not be able to afford to go on their own". We had an outpouring of Canadians coming forward with financial contributions.

We had strangers who could not get on the bus and who car pooled with other strangers. All of a sudden, through that exercise we had instant friendship and instant family that tied us together quite naturally.

It sounds simple, and maybe it was, but it really was about ordinary Canadians doing extraordinary things. Farmers from Quebec shook hands with those farmers who travelled from western Canada. It was about a schoolgirl who sang the national anthem next to me, who was beside a gentleman who was born thousands of miles away in southeast Asia but who now proudly calls his home Canada.

It is the kind of thanks and appreciation, without being patronizing, we received from our fellow family Quebecers on the streets of Montreal who said thank you for coming down in solidarity, thank you for not abandoning the concept of community and of family, despite the attempts of some in the media to portray things clearly that were not the reality on that day.

One of the lessons that rally taught all of us, particularly the political class on both government and opposition benches, is that unity requires inclusion. That was the strong message of the rally. It showed Canadians also need to get involved and be part of the solution. Canadians must be able to sing the song and not only hold the song sheet in order for the country to continue to be the kind of society that is recognized not only by us but, more important, by those across the globe.

• (1535)

On that day in Montreal there were thousands of individual acts by ordinary Canadians that epitomized what good citizenship is all about. Sometimes as the minister of citizenship I am called to define citizenship, what active and engaged citizenship means. Sometimes we have these speeches that try to articulate that. Yet how powerful and eloquent instead of those speeches was the act on that day that gave expression to what active and engaged citizenship should be and is all about.

We have also heard from our friends in the Bloc mutter about the federalist plots and the discount fares which were the real reasons people came together in Montreal. Does the leader really think a cabal of schemers and plotters as well organized as it may be could have produced such spectacular events without the willing, enthusiastic participation of those Canadians? I think not.

Does he subscribe to the politics of exclusion, to the politics of marginalizing people on the sidelines of our country? That is the second issue I would like to touch on this afternoon, the attempt by some to marginalize segments and people in Canadian society.