

National Capital

side of the capital area, and that the construction of public buildings should be limited to the Ontario side.

At a constitutional conference in 1969, members elected by the whole of Canada and represented by all the premiers were those who freely chose to create a Canadian capital encompassing both sides of the Ottawa River. Since then, the federal government, through the NCC and the Public Works Department, has undertaken to carry out a construction program downtown in Hull and this is still under way. In recent years it has shared the construction costs of two bridges, one over the Gatineau River and the other at La Place du Portage, and for rebuilding the water and sewers service downtown. It contributes one third of the installation costs of the regional aqueducts and sewers as well as of the filtration and sewage system whose expected costs will amount to about \$135 million. Besides, it has shared the costs of widening Greber Blvd. and of building highways A5 and A50 within the national capital area and of many other projects.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in my remarks, there have been several changes since 1958, particularly with respect to the population following the merging, as of January 1st 1975, of municipalities on the Quebec side of the Ottawa area. Gatineau, now a new city of about 62,000 inhabitants and with a territory much larger than Hull, would welcome more intervention from the National Capital Commission and the government of Canada. It might be said, as it has been many times in the past, that the means of communications do not allow for heavier traffic and that Hull deserved priority. But the people in Gatineau do not readily accept such reasons. Even if they realize that the erection of government buildings in Hull has an important impact on the economy of their city, they expect, as the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) mentioned when he addressed the members of a social club in that city, that the erection of government buildings is being considered within the city limits, which will allow a greater decentralization of government buildings, as the member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) said. To improve the highway network, the construction of highway A50 and of a bridge over the Ottawa River maybe in the area of Kettle Island, should be speeded up.

Mr. Speaker, I expect to participate actively in the proceedings of the joint special committee and, in concluding, I urge municipal authorities, chambers of commerce, social clubs and other organizations of the region, to submit their views to the joint committee on the national capital of tomorrow instead of letting a few dissenters be heard.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on the draft motion introduced by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp), for the appointment of a special joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons to review and report upon matters bearing upon the development of the national capital region, including the programs and operations of the National Capital Commission.

I sincerely believe that it is important that this House agree with this proposal and proceed as soon as possible to the establishment of such a committee, because in this way, the members of the committee will have time before

[Mr. Clermont.]

next fall to look fully into the material already submitted and other which will follow.

Those who, at the outset, decided to make Ottawa the capital of this country maybe did not consider that part of the urban population which lived across the river in another province. It was virtually impossible then to foresee that the whole area would become an interdependent urban complex and that the objectives of the federal public service would be as important as they are today.

It is only much later, when the federal government became interested in improving and developing the national capital, that they became aware of the problems related to the development of the national capital within the boundaries of a municipality subject to provincial legislation and adjoining another municipality subject to the legislation of another province. Today, the problems are acute and after 17 years of operation, it is only normal that a committee should review the program and operation of the National Capital Commission. The economic development of the national capital region depends greatly on the federal presence. For that reason only, the federal government should have its say in the development and the administration of the area.

But the federal government in addition decided that it was its duty to ensure that the capital, to befit this country, must reflect the bilingual nature of Canada, which had the effect of giving the National Capital Commission a leading role in the planning and development of the area. The action of the NCC in the national capital area is most obvious, and its results can be seen almost everywhere.

Whether one is proud of its presence, whether one wants increasingly more action and advice on its part, the fact still remains that the federal government and its official agent, the NCC, must take into consideration the regional municipalities that were set up on each side of the Ottawa River. They each have their own opinion on the way growth should be attained.

So we are at a deciding point in the evolution of the area. Urbanization of that territory occurred at a fast pace in the last few years but it remains possible to influence its shape and intensity. It is still possible to make the area a harmonious urban centre, a pleasant place to live in, a balanced territory from the linguistic and ethnic point of view. But that possibility only exists for a very limited time at the pace the population is increasing now. If we cannot quickly find new ways to administer the area, development might be anarchic, everyone looking after the problems of either his province or his city. That is not what the people concerned want, and I understand that is not what the federal government wants either.

So it is urgent that a parliamentary committee consider all aspects of the matter—and I stress all aspects. And in-depth study will have to be made, and not a phony consultation without any serious consequence. The Canadian capital area is a Canadian microcosm in evolution. As much as the Quebec side had been neglected in past years, all the more important was the action of the federal government since 1969 which showed its will to correct certain injustices.