

A Message From:
MARIA MINNA

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
BEACHES - EAST YORK**



Why I Voted Against Recognizing the Quebecois as a Nation within a United Canada

In the short time Parliament had to debate such an important motion that redefines this great country, I could not bring myself to support the Conservative motion on recognizing the Quebecois as a nation within a united Canada. As a Canadian and an immigrant who came to this country when I was nine years old, I believe in the Canadian nation - a country that embraces its multiculturalism and does not seek to divide.

After consulting with my constituents, caucus colleagues, staff, family, friends, and several academics I knew that I would be voting against. The unity of this country is bigger than all of us. This is not the time for political posturing.

Less than two days of debate in the House of Commons is not enough time to adequately address such an important issue as declaring the Quebecois as a nation. Closure was imposed on this debate and therefore many Members of Parliament could not have their view expressed. There was no proper debate on such an important issue that affects every Canadian. Bills that are introduced in Parliament are debated and studied in the House, in committees, and in the Senate. They are studied for



several days, voted upon, and then studied again by both the House and the Senate. To spend months on a particular Bill and less than two days on the future of Canada, to me, does not make any sense.

Furthermore, the particulars of the motion are not defined. What is meant by "Nation"? "Nation" has different meanings in English and in French. Is "Quebecois" supposed to mean every person living in Quebec or just those who are French-speaking? The definition of nation in this context is unclear. There could be so many other groups that wish to

be called nations as well, such as the Acadians, First Nations peoples, French-Canadians outside of Quebec, Newfoundland, or Alberta. This motion raised more questions than it answered. The passing of this motion could be the beginning of constitutional demands which I believe we do not need at this time. I was not prepared to play politics with the future of this country.

There are some people who have no problems acknowledging several "nations" in Canada, but I believe it takes away from the very idea of Canada as a bilingual and multicultural country. As a member of the immigrant community myself, I embrace the multiculturalism of Canada. It is imperative that we concentrate on the ties that pull us together and not the opposite. We are a model the world looks to for guidance and advice. It is important that we give hope to countries divided by language, ethnicity, or religion - that it is possible for a country to strive and prosper by working together for a common purpose. Working together on this great experiment we call Canada.

Maria Minna