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Announcement of Honourable Michael Chong

Posted on Tuesday, November 28 @ 08:09:23 EST by [editor](#)

November 28, 2006

Ottawa: First I want to say I have faith in the Prime Minister and in the government's agenda. I believe that the government is on the right track with its accountability package, with its environmental initiatives, with its crime and justice agenda and with its economic plan.

The reason why I became involved in politics is my belief in this nation we call Canada. I believe in this great country of ours, and I believe in one nation undivided, called Canada. This is a fundamental principle for me, not something on which I can, or will, compromise. Not now, not ever. While I am loyal to my party and to my leader, my first loyalty is to this Nation we call Canada.

It is for that fundamental principle that I cannot support the motion recognizing the Quebecois as a nation. I believe that recognizing the Quebecois as a nation, even within a united Canada, is nothing else than the recognition of an ethnic nationalism, and that I cannot support. It cannot be interpreted as the recognition of a territorial nationalism, since it does not refer to a geographic entity, but rather to a group of people.

I also believe that recognizing the Quebecois as a nation will provide the sovereigntists with an argument that they will use to confuse Quebecers in any future debate on sovereignty. They will argue if the Quebecois are a nation within Canada, the Quebecois are a certainly a nation without Canada.

I believe in one Nation undivided called Canada, based on a civic and not an ethnic nationalism. For Hundreds of years, almost every Canadian was of either British or French descent and we had two ethnic nationalisms reflective of that. By the 1960's, Canada was no longer homogenously made up of those of British or French ethnicity, and we decided to reject these dual ethnic nationalisms for a new tripartite approach. This approach adopted a civic nationalism, official bilingualism and official multiculturalism as the basis of a new vision for citizenship. This civic nationalism recognized that all citizens regardless of their birth or ethnic origin, regardless of whether they had been here 4 or 400 years, were full and equal citizens in Canadian society. The duality of our country, the English and the French fact were recognized through the policy of official bilingualism. Official multiculturalism ensured that all groups in Canada, whether of French or English descent, whether of African or Asian descent, whether they be of any other descent, would be recognized and celebrated.

I want to emphasize that I believe in the uniqueness of the French fact of Canada. I also believe that this is best accomplished through the policies of official bilingualism and multiculturalism. Above all that, it is done not through retreating into our solitudes but rather by engaging each other through a common civic nationalism.

I have reflected on this over the last five days, trying to see if I could reconcile voting for this motion. I cannot.

I also want to add that the Prime Minister was presented with a difficult dilemma by the Bloc Quebecois, and I do not fault him for what he felt he had to do.

I also have faith in the Prime Minister and in the government's agenda. I believe that the government is on the right track with its accountability package, with its environmental initiatives, with its crime and justice agenda and with its economic plan, and I believe Canadians do as well. I also believe in our party. I have been a life long conservative and remain so.

Thank you