

## **House Passes Motion Recognizing Quebec as a Nation**

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*The House of Commons has overwhelmingly passed a motion recognizing Quebec as a nation within Canada.*

Conservatives, most Liberal MPs, the NDP and the Bloc voted 266 to 16 in support of the controversial motion, which earlier in the day had prompted the resignation of Michael Chong as intergovernmental affairs minister.

Fifteen Liberal MPs voted against the motion, including Liberal leadership candidates Ken Dryden and Joe Volpe, along with Independent MP Garth Turner. Prime Minister Stephen Harper had introduced the surprise motion on Nov. 22, raising the ante on a Bloc Quebecois motion that sought to declare Quebecers a nation without reference to Canada.

The motion states: "That this House recognize that the Quebecois form a nation within a united Canada."

The Prime Minister has said he is using the word nation in a "cultural-sociological" rather than in a legal sense.



*Stephen Harper in Parliament*

"I think tonight was an historic night," Harper said after the vote." Canadians across the country said 'yes' to Quebec, 'yes' to Quebecers, and Quebecers said 'yes' to Canada.

"In politics you take risks— that's what we did — but national unity, national reconciliation are more important than any one party or than any one individual."

But on Monday afternoon, Chong said he opposed the motion and would abstain from voting because it "implies the recognition of ethnicity."  
"I believe in this great country of ours and I believe in one nation, undivided, called Canada, based on civic and not ethnic nationalism," he said.

Earlier in the day, Liberal leadership contender Gerard Kennedy, who doesn't have a seat in Parliament, announced he too opposed the motion. "I think it's a motion that is politically inspired, treating this country like a political trinket, and we need and should expect better."

The long-simmering issue first hit the headlines again in October, when the Quebec wing of the federal Liberal party voted to recognize Quebec as a nation in Canada. It immediately caused controversy within the party, as various Liberal leadership contenders either weighed in on the matter or urged party members not to let it dominate the race before the December convention.

The Bloc then followed by proposing a motion calling on the House to recognize Quebecers as a nation. Harper made a counter-proposal to define the Quebecois as a nation within Canada.

Over the following two days, the Bloc first amended its motion to say that they are a nation "currently within Canada" — leaving the door open to independence — and then declared its support for the government motion.