

# Local MPs applaud Tories'

## Quebec Nation motion

*The Post-Score peer*

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper's motion to define Quebec as a nation within a united Canada passed through a decisive Parliamentary vote last Monday evening, and local Bloc Quebecois MPs could not be happier about this highly controversial decision.

The issue began last week as the Bloc Quebecois attempted to capitalize on divisions within the Liberal and Conservative parties by tabling a motion recognizing Quebecers as a nation. PM Harper surprised many when he responded with a motion of his own, which recognizes the Québécois people as a nation within a united Canada.

Although BQ leader Gilles Duceppe originally opposed Harper's motion, he stunned many by reversing his position and lending his support to the Tories' proposition, which passed in a landslide 266-16 vote. Laval Bloc MP Nicole Demers says Duceppe was right in reversing his position. "What was important for us was to ensure that the Chamber of Commons recognized that the Quebecois people form a nation, and when we presented the motion last week we saw that it bothered the Harper government," Demers said. "The ending of the motion (within a united Canada) has no incidence on the fact that the nation was recognized."

Marc-Aurèle-Fortin MP Serge Ménard says that although many Quebecers were happy about the adoption of this motion, no one was left surprised. "Quebec as a nation is not something we ask ourselves anymore, I mean the National Assembly adopted a similar motion twice," he said.

Demers says the impact of this decision will be dictated by what the Bloc Quebecois decides to do with it. She hopes it will give Bloc MPs the strength to keep fighting for the well-being of Quebecers. "First we will press on the government to transfer the money to Quebec to solve the problem of fiscal imbalance, and we hope it will stop Ottawa from intervening with Quebec competencies," she said. Recent federal initiatives such as the national strategy on cancer and the environmental policy should be left out of Quebec, which already possesses similar policies. "We hope to pressure the government to pull out its pan-Canadian strategies and to give us the funds to pursue our own programs, to make sure that the money is well-used."



Although Ménard recognizes that the Quebec nation motion may only be symbolic, he believes it will help the sovereignty process in the future. "This recognition is only symbolic; it does not translate into concrete measures. However, once Canada becomes aware that Quebec is its own nation, the rest of the country will realize that a sovereign Quebec is a better idea and we will be able to leave Canada without bad feelings between both nations," Ménard explained.

Although many have criticized Duceppe for going along with Harper's motion, Demers supports Duceppe's view that the Bloc outmaneuvered Harper. "It gives us a step-up; the Tories must now prove that they respect Quebecers and that this motion is not only a word, not only symbolic, but that it means a lot more," she said. "Once Quebec is really recognized and respected, we can truly have a Quebec nation that can prosper with its own programs and with federal money meant to fund them."