

On the other hand, 74 per cent of the respondents insisted that the federal government have the authority to set national standards. I was not specific enough about this question. However, I think it is generally assumed that when we speak of national standards in Canada, we are speaking of health care, post-secondary education and similar programs, all of which are in provincial jurisdiction, funded in large measure by the federal government through transfer payments.

• (2150)

I draw attention to these two specific results to point out that the current system was an appropriate set of arrangements to meet the challenging and somewhat opposing public goals of local responsibility for service within standards set and largely funded by an outside body. Surely federal and provincial governments can streamline operations and find formal ways to eliminate duplication and improved service to the taxpayer.

I for one welcome the government's proposals to streamline and co-ordinate public services to save the taxpayer money.

My constituents value their Canadian citizenship. They were resolute in the desire that Canada remain a united country. They are proud of our charter of rights and 45 per cent indicated they would like to see extensions to the enumerated rights, property rights being most often mentioned.

As well, 61 per cent expressed a desire to abolish the notwithstanding clause. Although it was inserted at the insistence of western premiers, it has been used to infringe on minority rights. In fact the notwithstanding clause was seen as the cause of many of the irritants that some are speaking of these days.

I am told often by constituents that more needs to be done for the environment. Obviously my expertise is in the realm of public finance and my communications often reveal that. Therefore I must take this opportunity to state and affirm on behalf of my constituents here in the House of Commons that they are fearful of irreversible damage to our national environment and to public health. One constituent said: "If we do not fix our environmental deficit, then what will our efforts to fix our money deficit achieve? Our children will still be deprived of living in a healthy world".

The Constitution

This citizen spoke for many other constituents within my riding. In fact, 36 per cent of respondents to my survey said they thought environmental protection should be a responsibility of the federal government, 40 per cent would accept shared powers, but only 15 per cent would leave this crucial aspect of public policy to the provincial governments.

Canadians are telling us that they consider environmental protection to be of utmost concern. Even during these uncertain economic times they remain resolute. They want a strong central government to protect citizens from misguided development projects and from local governments competing to lower environmental standards.

Canadians want strong federal leadership to press the world for international environmental protocols and to have the fiscal authority and ability to use public funds for environmental causes.

At no time in our nation's history have the Canadian people been more a part of the development of constitutional proposals. The Spicer commission brought Canadians from coast to coast together to air grievances and give politicians direction. Every conceivable effort was made to provide opportunities for Canadians to express the values and aspirations that bind them together and to identify problems in our system.

A special joint committee chaired by my colleagues Mr. Edwards and Mr. Beaudoin heard from Canadians on the amending formula of the Constitution. Canadians in my riding and across the country told this committee that they were wary of extending the unanimity requirement. Canadians said they were comfortable with the current requirements that seven provinces with at least 50 per cent of the population were required for passage of constitutional proposals.

Canadians have participated in provincial committees, national forums, in federal committees, and will again be consulted after new proposals for constitutional renewal. I am grateful for this opportunity to summarize views expressed by residents of Edmonton Northwest and ask that all members consider these views.

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Madam Speaker, I am absolutely delighted to have the time in Parliament, limited though it might be this evening, to give the response of the constituents of Regina—Wascana on how they feel about the Constitution. There is no question in my mind that the earlier comments received