

The Constitution

There are still concerns out there that it is possible the distinct society clause could be misused by some future Quebec government. So there are still concerns about how it would fit into the charter and how it would fit into the Constitution.

Most western Canadians have enough generosity that if they feel that it will be used in a positive way to preserve the difference of Quebec, the culture, the civil code and the language, and will not be used against certain people in the province of Quebec, they can accept it. I think generosity and good will will accept it.

Western Canadians accept the inherent right of aboriginal people to self-government. They accept that in broad general terms, but they certainly want to know a lot more about it.

With respect to the division of powers, my constituents in Winnipeg—St. James, if I understand what they are telling me, are saying: "Yes, we will look at a new arrangement of powers as long as it does not come at the expense of a strong national government". They want a strong national government, but they will look at some re-arrangements of powers. After all, what they want is whichever government can do the best job. Sometimes it will be the provincial government or sometimes the federal government, but they do not want the powers of a strong national government diminished.

In conclusion, just let me say that my constituents are saying that if we get through this crisis, and I think we will and they think that as well, let us not allow it to happen again.

We have to start selling Confederation and federalism in this country called Canada to ourselves in a better way. To a great extent federalism is in trouble because we have never sold it. A lot of people do not understand it or we have just taken it for granted that it would be there forever.

Let us learn some lessons from this debate.

Mr. Willie Littlechild (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this tremendous and special opportunity to address the Chamber and Canadians in all four directions of this great land.

If I may, I would do this first as one who represents Wetaskiwin, which in Cree means hills of peace in *ka*

kanadak, our clean land. At the outset I want to thank our Prime Minister and our minister for national unity for allowing me to serve with 29 other outstanding Canadians on the special joint committee on a renewed Canada. Our hearings and the recent conferences have allowed us an opportunity to listen to many, many views from concerned leaders and citizens who all want to build a stronger and more united Canada.

The views of my constituents on all of the 28 government proposals have been presented to me both personally and by correspondence. A questionnaire was circulated in my riding at the beginning of January. In it I asked my constituents to respond to the government's initiative by expressing their agreement—strong agreement, disagreement, strong disagreement or indecision—with the proposals and providing personal comments. At the present time we have received over 250 responses to the questionnaire and I am hoping we will continue to receive further input. Several of my constituents have expressed how pleased they have been to have the opportunity to respond to the proposals directly and to make their views known.

If I may, I would now like to report by way of summary the percentage of those constituents who agree with the federal proposals.

Proposal No. 1, 73 per cent; 3, 81 per cent; 4, 50 per cent; 6, 64 per cent; 7, 52 per cent; 8, 86 per cent; 9, 70 per cent; 10, 72 per cent; 11, 75 per cent; 12, 82 per cent; 14, 79 per cent; proposal 15, 56 per cent; 16, 73 per cent; 17, 84 per cent; 19, 60 per cent; 20, 63 per cent; 21, 74 per cent; 22, 79 per cent; 24, 86 per cent; 25, 65 per cent; 26, 83 per cent; 74 per cent for proposal 27; and 28, 64 per cent.

I concluded my questionnaire with a 29th question, which read: "If the proposals that I agree with are achieved, then I will accept the proposals I disagree with". 148 respondents disagreed with this statement, 63 agreed and another 30 were undecided.

As is evidenced by the preceding statistics, the majority of people who responded to the questionnaire supported almost all of the proposals in part 1 of the package. Notably, one of my constituents made the helpful suggestion that the word "tolerance" in the Canada clause phrase "the importance of tolerance for individuals,