

As Canadians we do not always take sufficient pride in the accomplishments of our nation. I am proud to belong to a Government and to a nation that strives to find common ground in order to create an ever more just, humane, and understanding national society for the benefit of all its members, both individually and collectively. That is what Canada is all about.

I could not speak to this motion without paying special tribute to the excellent work of the members of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on the 1987 Constitutional Accord. Their efforts in undertaking this enormous task are worthy of praise and admiration. Their report is thorough and compelling. It merits full study, and it demonstrates how seriously the committee took its task of scrutinizing the Accord.

The Joint Committee heard from Canadians from all regions in all walks of life. This type of public debate is both healthy and essential because constitutional documents are the property of the people. They are living documents which must represent the national will.

[*Translation*]

Many witnesses who appeared before the joint committee advocated the adoption of the 1987 Accord because it achieves national reconciliation and blurs our memory of the shock of the 1980 Quebec referendum and the ensuing isolation of that province during the 1981 and 1982 constitutional patriation process.

The Meech Lake Accord adoption will for ever turn that page of our history. We can look forward to a more challenging future as a result of greater harmony and closer cooperation. This is why I feel confident that we are at the dawn of an era of outstanding achievements for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the Premiers of the 10 provinces have come together to forge a new unity, thereby reinvigorating our land. The task now rests with us, Members of Parliament, to confirm this historic Accord.

To say no to the Accord is to say no to the vision of a united Canada. All of us share a common purpose in the House, to ensure that our Constitution includes all parts of Canada, all provinces, and with special emphasis on this occasion to bringing Quebec into the constitutional family. Therefore, I think our responsibilities are clear.

In a careful way we have an agreement between the Prime Minister and the 10 First Ministers of our country which is well thought out, well considered, properly crafted in a legal and historic sense, and one which has said to the people of the Province of Quebec that we will welcome you with open arms into the constitutional family of Canada.

At the same time we have articulated the nature of our country, a country with wide geographic dimensions but indeed divergent parts; a country that is often said to be

difficult to govern, but because of its diversity, because of its natural inherent strengths and the qualities of the regions and the people who make up the different parts of our country, it is one to which all Canadians say that they are proud to be members of this great nation.

I call upon all Members to support this Accord. I know that because of the nature of the House of Commons, being an adversarial forum, it is traditional to take an adversarial position and suggest that this provision or that provision is not totally satisfactory. We now have an opportunity to transcend partisanship in terms of this debate, an opportunity for all of us to join together and send a message to the people of Canada, and send a message to those people who, unfortunately, have been excluded from the constitutional family over the years since the acceptance of the 1982 Constitution.

Finally, if I may be permitted to say so, I am very proud of the leadership the Prime Minister has given to this particular matter. I will not bother you with quoting my own colleagues on the government side of the House to support that.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Where are they all?

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Regardless of political stripe, regardless of the fact that participants represented all political Parties in this country at these meetings, they were unanimous in their praise for the manner in which the Prime Minister gave leadership, and the perseverance and inspiration he gave with respect to bringing forward this Accord.

**Mr. Foster:** Where is he this morning? Why is the Prime Minister not here?

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** We will look forward to the support of the House of Commons for this Accord. To do otherwise is to send an unfortunate message to a very large section of our country, to many people, and to the whole concept of our country as has been developed over the years. I know that there will not be a sense of partisanship here, that there will be a sense of unity which will pervade the debate.

As I said at the outset, it is with great pride that I say to the House of Commons and the people of Canada, this is an historic moment in our history. This is an opportunity for us to join together.

**Mr. Lapierre:** Where is your Cabinet? Where is your Prime Minister?

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the Opposition may be on the verge of sinking down to partisanship again, but I wish to avoid that.

I wish to call upon them, notwithstanding their difficulties within their own caucus, to speak to this without any sense of partisanship, in order that we can go forward into a new era with all parts of Canada united and working toward a future which is without parallel in the world.