

The Constitution

Atlantic Canadians. Elected, effective and equal is a step in the right direction.

I want to conclude my comments this evening by saying that for all of our problems, in Canada we are truly a blessed nation. We have a standard of living that most countries would simply love to emulate, a network of social programs that are the envy of the world, and an international reputation surpassed by few.

The challenges that Canada is currently facing are great, but I do not believe they are insurmountable. In the weeks and months ahead we must call upon our qualities of fairness and willingness to compromise, to forge an agreement that will respect the diversity of all Canadians. To do otherwise would be to sacrifice all that our forefathers worked so hard to create.

We cannot afford to be complacent and assume that Canada will always be there. To have a world without the Soviet Union only a few short months ago would indeed have been unthinkable.

So while the challenges are great, the alternatives are all too real. We must work diligently to ensure that those alternatives do not become the reality.

[Translation]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this special debate to allow members to report to the House and to all Canadians what their constituents think and have told them on the constitutional issue. First, I would like to explain what I did in Saint-Léonard, as the member of Parliament for that riding. Some members have held public meetings; others took polls. Others again went from door to door.

• (1930)

I am one of those who sent a questionnaire to all their constituents, to every address in their riding. During the summer, I also set up a three-week door to door program, so that those who wanted to provide answers could do so using the questionnaire, or by giving me personally their opinions on the whole constitutional issue and the future of the country.

This exercise started with a Liberal Party proposal for constitutional reform which was made public by the Leader of the Opposition during a speech in Montreal on April 21, 1991. The proposal included nine points

which I will read briefly, and that everybody knows. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition himself has already explained the proposal during his speech on constitutional reform and has tabled it in the House. Those nine points are: (1) a declaration on the nature of Canada; (2) the attachment to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; (3) the strengthening of the Canadian economic union; (4) the institutional reform; (5) the division of powers: (a) spending power, (b) immigration; (6) the Supreme Court of Canada; (7) the aboriginal peoples; (8) the amending formula; and (9) the national referendum.

With these nine points, I prepared a questionnaire that, as I said, was distributed to some 38,000 households in my riding. Since this questionnaire was mailed in June, people had all summer to fill it in. At the same time, I announced a canvassing operation and I visited one neighbourhood per evening, of which there are 14 in my riding. On August 12, I was in Rosemont; on August 13, in Mont-Carmel; on August 14, in Garibaldi; on August 15, in Saint-Gilbert; on August 16, in Hébert; on August 19, in Saint-Léonard; on August 20, in Delorme; on August 21, in Port-Maurice; on August 22, in Ferland, on August 26, in Saint-Angèle; on August 27, in Pirandello; on August 29, in Pie-XII. Unfortunately, because of the persistent bad weather, I was not able to visit the neighbourhood of Coubertin.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that during those 13 evenings going from door to door with a group from my riding, we met people from all ages and all walks of life. So I can tell you that it is their opinion; that opinion is rather representative and is more or less similar to that of those who filled in the questionnaire and returned it to me.

Madam Speaker, I do not intend to give you my opinion on this whole constitutional debate this evening. As members of the House, I believe that we will have the opportunity to do so when the report of the joint committee is tabled, or when the federal government makes offers to the provinces. At that time, there will be a debate in the House and, as a member of Parliament, I will then give my opinion. So this evening during the 10 minutes that I am allowed in this special debate, I want to make sure that it is the people from Saint-Léonard who are heard. I want to tell the House, as well as my hon. colleagues and all the Canadians who are watching us and can read *Hansard* starting tomorrow morning,