

I want to speak about institutional reform in Canada. Another of the fundamental changes Brian Mulroney's Government has introduced has been to open up our national institutions. For too long, too much power was concentrated in too few hands in Ottawa. We've changed that.

For example, Parliament now has the power to review senior appointments. Provincial governments have been drawn directly into the bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations. First Ministers meet annually, in addition to special conferences on the constitution, aboriginal rights and trade. And these meetings are around the country, not just in Ottawa. Parliament now establishes its own inquiries; elects its own Speaker; and can force the government to respond formally to all committee recommendations. We have started the experiment of provinces naming trade representatives to Canadian embassies. There have been 547 formal Federal-Provincial meetings at ministerial level in thirty months. Deputy Ministers from outside Ottawa have been appointed to key portfolios, including Finance, Justice, Science and Technology, and Federal-Provincial relations. Women are being treated as equals in Federal appointments, including to the highest offices. Farmers get appointed to the Bank of Canada. We are changing the system to fit the country.

By any fair accounting, that is an impressive record for the first thirty months - and we are just getting started. But in the same way that our fiscal flexibility is limited by the deficits of the Liberal years, so is our ability to reform our institutions limited by another legacy of the Trudeau era - a constitutional agreement which Quebec wouldn't sign. We learned at the last aboriginal conference just how limiting that can be. An amending formula designed for ten provinces works badly when only nine are there. As a practical matter, many major reforms can't be attempted until our Constitution is complete.

The Premiers recognize that reality. That is why, in Edmonton last August, with Premier Getty in the Chair, they agreed unanimously that their top constitutional priority was to bring Quebec into the Constitution. At that same Edmonton meeting, Premier Getty and the others agreed that they would pursue other constitutional questions, including Senate reform, fisheries and property rights, after having addressed Quebec's concerns.

That Alberta meeting of Premiers also unanimously agreed that the basis of the discussion about completing the Constitution would be the five conditions which Premier Bourassa and the Liberal Party of Quebec set out in the platform on which they won the last Quebec election. Those five conditions, agreed to unanimously by the Premiers, were spelled out in the document