

The Constitution

Last, I should note that almost two-thirds of the respondents rejected the contention that Quebec should have a different constitutional relationship with the rest of Canada.

I do not agree with that. However, it is my duty to present that to this House. It is my duty to present it to the constitutional committee, which I have done. I would like to table the full report of our constituent assembly and I will cheerfully provide individual copies to any member who would request one.

Let me close by saying the Canada that served me so well in my youth continues to serve me and my family, my friends and loved ones. It is a Canada that I believe must change to survive and grow. I believe that survival, that growth, is of fundamental importance to those who will come after us. I believe that they too have every right to enjoy the security that being a Canadian affords us all and that has served me so well.

I pray we in this House, we in this country, have the wisdom to find the path to that new growth.

Mr. Doug Fee (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate and report the views of Canadians in my riding of Red Deer.

What we are doing tonight is something that should happen in this Chamber far more often. A common concern expressed very strongly to me when I go home is the question: "Why do individuals members of Parliament not better represent people like me? Why aren't my views expressed on the floor of the House of Commons?" This debate allows that. Individual members of Parliament are reflecting and reporting the views of their constituents on the Constitution.

The issue of the Constitution tends to be dominated by those who report it, being major players. The media constantly reports politicians' views, academics' views and views of special interest groups. In this debate, we are reporting the views of our constituents, the ordinary Canadians, our friends and our neighbours, the many people who came out to share their ideas, their thoughts and their love for this nation.

It is the people we represent who make these short reports so important. For a constitution to work, in order

for it to be the basis for a nation to grow in unity and strength, it has to reflect the values and the commitments of the people it serves. Constitutions are not for politicians and academics. Constitutions must be for people.

When the joint committee cancelled its scheduled meetings in my riding in November, I went ahead and held these meetings. I am glad I did. The people who attended the November meetings in Sylvan Lake, Innisfail and Red Deer told me repeatedly that this was the way the issue should have been addressed in the first place. I was told we did not need high-priced commissions, or even special joint committees. Members of Parliament should be the ones who listen and should be given the opportunity to debate, to reflect and to represent the views of their constituents. I quote one of the more blunt contributors: "I am glad to see you are finally doing what we elected you for".

Coming out of this first series of meetings, I was told that the economy was every bit as important as the Constitution. Building on that demand, I held a second series of public meetings in January in which we discussed both the economy and the Constitution.

I also held a constituent assembly of high school students. Every high school in the riding was invited to select three students. The group met at Red Deer College and spent a full day debating the 28 proposals in the constitutional package.

The summary of my constitutional meetings and the student constituent assembly has been shared with both the minister and a special joint committee. Yesterday, two participants from the high school assembly, Barb Ellingson from Innisfail and Paul Abbott from Red Deer, had the opportunity to meet with the joint committee and elaborate on the recommendations made by their constituent assembly of high school students. They did an excellent job of representing their constituents and communicating their positions. Most of my comments will be based on the other series of meetings we had.

This last weekend the minister said that this is not the time for inflammatory rhetoric or phrases. Debate, according to him, has moved beyond that. I would hope that he and the rest of you who are listening would note