

Appendix

The fact that you have reconsidered your decision and are prepared to call a conference in the autumn of 1950 meets with our approval, although we are naturally disturbed that the calling of the conference is to be so long delayed. A meeting in the fall of 1950 will mean that over four years will have elapsed since the adjournment of the previous conference. This is a long and, in our opinion, unwarranted delay in coming together as governments to discuss the many perplexing problems that were left unsolved when the last conference was adjourned. When seven of the provincial governments entered into taxation agreements with the dominion, they did so in the belief that some of the social security proposals made at the reconstruction conference in 1945 would be implemented in whole or in part. The fact that a discussion of these important matters is to be further delayed for another ten months or a year gives us serious cause for concern.

The government of Saskatchewan will be pleased to forward to you in the course of the next few months our recommendations regarding subjects for discussion in the general conference which you propose convening in the fall of 1950. I trust we can take it for granted that the basis of these discussions will be the recommendations of the Rowell-Sirois commission which was appointed by the dominion government and whose proposals have not yet been implemented. Furthermore, I trust we can be assured that the dominion proposals of August, 1945, which would have implemented only in part the Rowell-Sirois report, will also be on the agenda as a basis for discussion.

While the government of this province is prepared to co-operate in every way possible, both in the conference called for January 10 and the one you are proposing for autumn, 1950, I think I should state quite frankly that in our opinion the calling of these conferences should have been reversed. Certainly if we are to discuss procedures for amending the constitution of Canada and re-allocating responsibilities between the dominion and the provinces, we ought first to have a clear understanding as to the financial responsibilities which our respective jurisdictions are to assume. It is difficult for me to see how we can discuss what constitutional responsibilities we are able to assume until we know what financial resources will be at our disposal. However, since your government has seen fit to call the constitutional conference first and the general conference later, we will do our best to make both of these conferences a success, although we are convinced that the problems to be discussed are inseparable and that there will have to be a good deal of latitude when these matters are under consideration.

Yours sincerely,
T. C. Douglas

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Canada

Ottawa, December 19, 1949

Hon. T. C. Douglas, M.L.A.,
Premier of Saskatchewan,
Parliament Buildings,
Regina, Saskatchewan.

My dear Premier:

Your letter of December 10 was placed before me today on my return after a brief absence from Ottawa.

I am pleased to know that my proposal for a general conference to be held early in the autumn of 1950 meets with the concurrence of the government of Saskatchewan. The matters for discussion at that conference will, as I indicated in my letter of December 7, depend upon the views of the respective governments as to what should constitute the agenda. I shall be very glad to receive the recommendations as to subjects for discussion which the government of Saskatchewan plans to forward in the course of the next few months. Meanwhile I shall not attempt to set out the views of the federal government nor shall I make any comment on the various observations in the third paragraph of your letter concerning the appropriateness of the time suggested for the general conference or the implementation of earlier proposals.

With regard to an agenda or specific proposals for the conference on constitutional amendment which is to open on January 10, my colleagues and I have noted your comments and shall see that they are carefully considered in the light of views expressed by the premiers of the other provinces.

We have been somewhat surprised at the suggestion that the order of the two conferences proposed should have been reversed. It seems to us that this view rests on a misapprehension as to the scope of the January meeting. As I mentioned in my letters of September 14 and November 7, and again in my letter of December 7, our object in proposing the conference is to have consideration given to devising a satisfactory procedure for amending the constitution of Canada. We did not suggest that the conference should consider "re-allocating responsibilities between the dominion and the provinces". And the federal government does not intend to suggest any such amendments at the conference.

We would like to see established in Canada a procedure for making amendments which may be required in the future. The general conference proposed for the autumn of 1950 may result in agreement that certain amendments are desirable. If so, it is our hope that the constitutional conference of January 1950 will have prepared the way by deciding the procedure by which such amendments can be made.

Yours sincerely,

Louis S. St. Laurent

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER
Province of British Columbia

Victoria, December 12, 1949

Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent,
Prime Minister of Canada,
Parliament Buildings,
Ottawa, Canada.

My dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I have for acknowledgment your letter of December 7, and may say that I heartily concur in the suggestion contained in paragraph two of your communication. I think that no purpose would be served at this time in setting a fixed agenda.

With reference to a proposed dominion conference in the fall of 1950, please be advised that the government of this province will be only too happy to be represented at that meeting.

With kindest personal regards.

Yours faithfully,

Byron I. Johnson
Premier