two matters in the capable hands of the committee which is currently discussing the government's proposals.

Finally, with regard to the opinions of my constituents on the matter of the council of the federation, a clear majority could not support the establishment of such a council. Many feared it would be just another layer of government with an equally cumbersome bureaucracy and an expense which we could do without. First ministers' meetings held on a regular basis were viewed as a more appropriate alternative.

I was grateful for the opportunities the forums presented me to obtain the views of my constituents on the government's constitutional proposals. They will be part of my response in this Chamber to the government's final constitutional package when it is presented in the near future.

In conclusion, I am also grateful for this opportunity to share with other members in this House during this special debate some of the views and opinions of my constituents on the Constitution and the government's proposals.

The Liberal Party has also presented its own position on the Constitution to the government and to Canadians. We have indicated the direction we would like the government to take in order to bring about what we all desire for Canada: a united, proud and independent country for all Canadians.

• (2010)

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would just like to add this.

[*Translation*]

If I may for a moment, I would like to say something on a different matter. A few hours ago I heard that one of my colleagues, the hon. member for Saint-Denis, is celebrating today his 28th year in this House. He has been elected to this House 28 years ago, and I want to congratulate him.

[*English*]

Also, I see in the Chamber the member for Winnipeg South, the co-chair of our constitutional committee. I want to express my appreciation and respect for the committee and wish it well in its future endeavours.

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Winnipeg South): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. gentleman opposite for his kind words and good wishes. It means a great deal to all of us in the House that we conduct these discussions in the kind of non-partisan manner that we have been able to do.

You see, Madam Speaker, that I come today without a formal speech. I am doing this because of some of the things that we heard in the committee over the past two months. It is very clear that many people are concerned that members of Parliament come and appear to simply read from material that people in the public believe has been drafted by the *status quo*, by the bureaucracy. They are feeling very fearful and suspicious that members of Parliament are not speaking from their hearts or are not speaking from their own sense of conviction.

I hope that I will be able to carry on a coherent discussion this afternoon because I intend to do so only from notes in order to respond to some of those concerns of Canadians all across the country.

I would like to begin by making a comment about the committee's work in the travel that we have had. We have been from one end of the country to the other and to all sorts of far reaches, the furthest reaches of the land. During that time we have received over 4,000 submissions and, believe it or not, we have heard from 560-some individuals and we still have some more tomorrow. Of that number, about 192 represent organizations. This is in addition to the four conferences that we have also been participating in, as listeners in most cases and sometimes as participants.

I think it is indicative of this round of the constitutional talks that Parliament has listened, all members of Parliament have listened to what their constituents have been telling them since the last round of constitutional talks that ended in the failure of Meech Lake. This time our concern is that people have an opportunity to fully participate in this constitutional debate and to know that if they are determined to have a say that they will have the ability and the opportunity to do so.

This is the Canada round. There is no doubt about that. It responds to a host of concerns that were expressed throughout the process of reviewing the Meech Lake Accord when it was tried at the last dying moments to resurrect it by listening to Canadians, and from the things that we have heard since, not just from