

We must seek to develop democratic, populist based mechanisms which would allow rank and file Canadians to participate in the process. In light of the fact that any fundamental change in federal-provincial relationships would by definition require constitutional amendments, and recognizing that a vast majority of Canadians have no desire for this at this time, I question why our friends in the Bloc are raising the issue. Canadians are in no mood for another round of constitutional deal making, particularly when government deficits and debt are seriously undermining the ability of our economy to perform.

While we agree with the general thrust of the motion before us, we do not see how the issue of federal-provincial jurisdictions can be effectively dealt with without revisiting the Constitution for which there is currently little or no consensus.

I would like to remind members of the Bloc that we have a very constructive set of specific proposals for constitutional reform which incorporate proposals to restructure federal-provincial jurisdictions in a manner we think will be attractive to all provinces, including Quebec.

I extend a sincere invitation to members of the Bloc and all members of the House to carefully examine Reform's written policy position on constitutional reform. The concerns which have led to the introduction of this motion before us today are specifically addressed in that position paper.

We believe that the entrenchment of private property rights and reform of the Senate are also very important to Canadians, as important as redefining federal-provincial relationships. This is because these elements define basic relationships between individuals and governments and underline regional fairness within Confederation.

The right to own private property without fear of being deprived thereof is a fundamental cornerstone of a free market economy and is ultimately the true test of a real democracy. Yet we have not embraced this principle to date.

An effective Senate, democratically elected on the basis of representation by region rather than population, would ensure the interests of all Canadians were protected from the tyranny of the majority, a way to ensure that Canadians would not have to endure another national energy program.

These issues are very important to many Canadians, and we think they deserve equal standing in future constitutional negotiations. However, Canadians have little desire to revisit the Constitution at this time. Until there is a clear consensus to proceed with constitutional renewal, Reformers are committed to advocate and support constructive change outside constitu-

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tional discussions. That is what Canadians want and need and that is what they have told us to do.

I understand the frustration of the Bloc Quebecois at the waste of taxpayers' money due to duplication and overlap of government services. I further believe that the turf wars fought by competing bureaucracies are in large part responsible for much of the tension between Quebec and the federal government. I can assure the House that Quebec is not alone in its resentment. The solution in the long run is a decentralization of powers.

Meanwhile we should all be aware of the cost of duplication and overlap. We urge the government to move to eliminate it in a manner consistent with my earlier statement within the framework of an existing Constitution. It is my understanding that the public accounts committee has the ability to scrutinize all spending programs.

Once again I say that although I generally agree with the Bloc Quebecois' intent with this motion I question why we need to create a special committee to cover ground which an existing committee has the ability to cover.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to say that I agree with the Bloc Quebecois' concern over the waste of taxpayers' money, but I believe that this motion comes close to striking at the heart of our Constitution. The Reform Party supports the position that our Constitution should be reformed and that Confederation should be maintained. It can only be maintained by a clear commitment to Canada as one nation in which the demands and aspirations of all the regions are entitled to equal status in constitutional negotiations and political debate.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, first I want to congratulate my colleague on his initial address in the House. I have just a few brief questions. They are very serious ones on which I would like his reaction.

• (1535)

The suggestion was made that the Bloc Quebecois wanted to further its own personal agenda which is in a sense the separation, not in the real sense of separation, of Quebec from Canada through constitutional wrangling and that may be one option it is pursuing. One never knows. Obviously the kind of dedication Bloc members show toward that objective is sometimes rather obsessive.

Is there not another possibility that it was their intent to attempt to embarrass the government by suggesting it is not being done and there is no mechanism for doing it? I would like my hon. colleague to consider that possibility and give me his reaction to it.