

In August 1986 the 27th Annual Premiers Conference took place in Edmonton. At that time the Premiers unanimously agreed "that their top constitutional priority is to embark immediately upon a federal-provincial process, using Quebec's five proposals as a basis for discussion, to bring about Quebec's full and active participation in the Canadian federation. There was a consensus among the Premiers that then they will pursue further constitutional discussions on matters raised by some provinces which will include, amongst other items, Senate reform, fisheries, property rights, etc." This subsequently became known as the *Edmonton Declaration*.

It should be noted that the process of aboriginal constitutional conferences started in 1983 and concluded in March 1987 without an agreement. Thus the process of these aboriginal constitutional conferences had not been completed successfully at the time of the *Edmonton Declaration*.

Between August 1986 and April 1987 intensive discussion took place among ministers and officials on Quebec's proposals. At a meeting at Meech Lake, on April 30, 1987 the First Ministers worked out an agreement in principle on Quebec's five proposals. Officials were directed to draft a legal document to incorporate the agreement. On June 2 and 3, the First Ministers met at the Langevin Building in Ottawa and reached agreement on the precise wording of the Accord. On June 23, 1987 the Quebec National Assembly became the first legislature to approve the Meech Lake Accord which, as set out in Section 39(2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, triggered the three year period for ratification.

During the course of our hearings witness after witness, even those most critical of the Meech Lake Accord expressed support for Canadian unity and the need to make Canada's second most populous province an active participant in federal-provincial negotiations and a participating member of the Canadian constitutional family. There was general agreement that Quebec's five proposals were reasonable for that purpose.