

Tensions between provinces and the central government are not unique to Canada, they are part of every federal system.

Canadians expect their government to govern with honesty and integrity. Perhaps more important than a perfect constitution is the good and responsible conduct of a government. Quebec also recognizes this. The high personal standing of Prime Minister Chrétien in Quebec demonstrates that people have confidence in his leadership.

We are calm and confident on the eve of the Quebec election. We are fully confident that Premier Johnson can win. If not, let me remind you that Quebec elected a Parti québécois government in the past, then rejected its separatist proposal in a referendum, then re-elected it some months after that. Polls in Quebec today suggest a very similar duality in the minds of Quebecers.

People in Quebec have also been hit hard by the recession. They see that Canada is recovering and I do not think that they are willing to jeopardize the recovery by voting for separation.

Canada this year topped the UN Human Development index, which identifies the living conditions and quality of life around the world. Canada remains an excellent place in which to live, to work and to invest. In a turbulent and unpredictable world, Canada, like Japan, remains a prosperous and peaceful nation.

After my visit to Japan, I am convinced that the scope for our co-operation, between governments, between business, and between people, both in Asia and throughout the world, is rich and exciting.

Thank you.