

the support of the overwhelming majority of Canadians. All public opinion polls show this, even those taken only in Western Canada. The Conservative Party acknowledges it. Mr. Epp, the Conservative Party spokesman has stated:

"...It is the popular will of Canadians that our constitution rest in this country. It is also the popular will that we have a charter of rights and freedoms for the Canadian people embedded in the constitution."

There is no real doubt that the substance of the government's package has the support of the large majority of Canadians.

The package is designed to strengthen our federation, after a period of severe challenge, particularly in Quebec. The symbolic act of patriation is important in this regard. So is the establishment of an amending formula that will be more flexible than the long-sought unanimity and that will break the vicious pattern of bargaining amendments to the distribution of powers against such basic principles as patriation and the charter of rights. I may say to our British friends that a charter of rights has a special place in a federation which it may not have in a unitary state. It establishes that certain basic rights will be available to a citizen throughout the country, and particularly responds to our pluralistic, multicultural society.

The third criterion was that the government's measures should be legal and constitutional. Again, this was not something we considered lightly. I personally am a former professor of constitutional law, as is Prime Minister Trudeau. Cabinet received carefully-weighted advice from its most senior legal officers. It was concluded that there was no reasonable doubt as to the legality and constitutionality of the course we proposed. We recognised that it represented a change in direction in terms of policy, but the change was fully within the rights of the federal government and parliament. We knew the measure would be politically controversial, but we were confident that it was justified and that it would sever the long-term interests of Canada.

I know that members of the British parliament have been exposed to very intensive lobbying by certain provinces arguing that the measure proposed is illegal and unconstitutional. I hope some of them appreciate the irony of the Quebec Agent General now lobbying to keep Canada from realizing full sovereignty when the Parti québécois was