

*The Constitution*

an issue of importance such as the one we are debating today.

While I received nearly 500 responses from my questionnaire in my householder, I can say that the results were very similar to those I obtained from a questionnaire I distributed during the constitutional forums. I will, therefore, confine my remarks to the comments I heard at the forums and refer to the results from the questionnaires I received from these three forums.

To begin with, I was very pleased to see the interest my constituents had in the constitutional debate. I would, of course, like to thank those constituents who did come out on three winter nights to meet and discuss with their member of Parliament, friends and neighbours an issue which they felt was of considerable importance.

I was particularly delighted with the general consensus present at each forum whereby participants had a shared desire for Canada to remain a strong and united country.

There was also substantial support for the aboriginal people of Canada. A clear majority of participants supported aboriginal self-government and native participation in the current constitutional deliberations. Strong support was also present at our forums for a constitutional amendment to permit aboriginal matters not addressed in the current constitutional talks to be addressed in the future.

On the issue of Senate reform, an overwhelming amount of support was displayed for an elected Senate. There was, however, a rough split on whether or not there should be an equal number of senators representing the regions of Canada. In addition, support for an equal number of senators for each province was not evident.

With regard to reform measures for the House of Commons, a significant majority of participants supported members of Parliament having more free votes and having vacant seats in the House filled within 120 days.

On the question of designating Quebec as a distinct society, the majority of participants were not in favour of the proposal. However, while I am committed to this proposal on a personal basis, I respect the views of my constituents and I was heartened by the support that was

given to the recognition of Canada's linguistic duality as being a fundamental characteristic of our country.

While there was support for a Canada clause to be placed in our Constitution, there was concern expressed as to what exactly would be in this clause. Some participants commented about the ambiguity surrounding some of the aspects being considered for insertion in the Canada clause.

The proposals relating to a common market throughout Canada and the issue of an economic union were closely examined, and while they were afforded considerable support especially as they relate to the free movement of people, goods and services across the country, there was some concern expressed as to a need for clarification. Specific concern was expressed over how the economic union should be arranged and what it would entail.

The harmonization of economic policies between the federal government and the provinces did however receive support, while questions were raised as to whether or not the federal government or the provincial governments should have sole jurisdiction in certain matters.

Concern was also present over federal funding in provincial areas of jurisdiction. Most participants wish to obtain assurances that standard programs and services would continue to exist throughout Canada and federal funds would not be reduced if provincial governments obtained complete jurisdiction in specific matters currently involving the federal government.

On a more general theme, most of the forum participants in my riding believe that the proposals put forward by the federal government were indeed too ambiguous. Another common observation was that there were just too many proposals. This sentiment I believe has been echoed by many Canadians in recent days.

I too share these two comments on the constitutional proposals of the government but I recognize that they are proposals and there is every hope that we will see a number of these proposals better defined in the final package, as our party has suggested to the government.

I also believe that we will see a reduction in the number of proposals contained in the final package when it is presented in the House. I will, for now, leave those