

The Constitution

different. In English, there are many interpretations from not identical to superior. Quebecers are different, but then many would say that Albertans are different. We are all Canadians, we are equal.

As knowledge of our Canadian history grows and the intent of this clause is better understood, the support for distinct society is growing.

[Translation]

Canada is a bilingual country. In 1969, the Canadian government passed the Official Languages Act. The majority of people in my riding accepted that legislation. The former Prime Minister of Alberta, the hon. Peter Lougheed, said: "Bilingualism is the essence of our country". I am pleased to have the option of speaking in English and in French.

[English]

My electors want a strong central government that will deal with the unity question, the economy and the environment. There is strong support for aboriginal self-government and for full movement of people, goods, services and capital across Canada.

Canadians are anxious to settle the constitutional question and to move on to the economic issues of the day. In a letter I received recently, a Grade 6 student writes: "Canada is my country. I love my country." and she asks "Don't Canadians care about Canada?". An 80-year-old gentlemen tells me: "We don't need the Council of the Federation. We have too much government as it is.". A woman in my riding said: "If we are to save the country, the media better stop dramatizing our differences and focus on what Canadians have in common."

I share my constituents' concerns about the decorum of MPs in the House of Commons, the constraints of party discipline and the need for more free votes.

Canadians working together have built a nation that is respected and admired around the world for its high level of freedom and opportunity. Unfortunately too many Canadians take Canada's successes for granted.

Today there are forces at work in Canada that would divide this country. They want to destroy our Canada.

The constituents of the federal riding of St. Albert want a united Canada redesigned to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Thomas D'Arcy McGee was right about Canada's future when he said: "Each generation of Canadians has left the country more prosperous, more self-aware, more respected in the world".

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say in beginning my remarks that, like many Canadians, I think it is difficult to concentrate on constitutional matters when we know there are so many people across this country who are suffering job losses and really have very deep fears about the future for themselves and for their children.

In Vancouver East this is the view of many of my constituents. Yet at the same time they care very much about the future of Canada.

Tonight I would like to take this opportunity to put on the record the conclusions of two organizations that met and are meeting in Vancouver and particularly in Vancouver East. They are very concerned about a special constitutional issue, that issue being the protection for minorities which is so important in our Constitution.

I would like to table one report which is entitled *Rule of Law Betrayed, a Charter with an Expedient Override*. This report was prepared by members of Coalition 33, most of whom are Chinese Canadians and it is a Vancouver group.

The second report I will refer to was prepared by my own Vancouver East federal riding association following a series of meetings we had over the summer months. We also concentrated on the protection of minority rights so that will be the topic of my presentation tonight.

Minority groups in British Columbia and across Canada have experienced racism and discrimination in the past which must never again be tolerated. We must remind ourselves of our history. The racist Chinese head tax, an exclusion act, the internment of Japanese Canadians, the denial of the vote to Asians and aboriginal people, the discrimination against black Canadians and persons of colour in all regions of Canada, and the rights of women and persons with disabilities continue to be ignored.