

The Government therefore proposed to the provincial governments that joint action should begin as soon as possible on the clarification of federal and provincial roles and the elimination of duplication. The Premiers have responded positively. The First Ministers' Conference on the Constitution, now expected to take place at the end of this month, will consider how best to launch this major enterprise.

With respect to the reform of the Constitution, the Government has set out only two fundamental requirements. The new Constitution must provide for Canada to continue as a genuine federation, and it must contain a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including linguistic rights. The Government has shown its deep concern that real progress toward change soon be achieved, so that uncertainty can be dispelled and unity reinforced. In particular, the Government believes it essential that clear and important progress be made before Quebecers are asked by their provincial government to vote in a referendum about their future.

Because there has been some misunderstanding about two important features of constitutional renewal, the Government wishes to make its position clear once again. The first is the role of the Monarch and the Governor General. The Government's view was and remains that the new Constitution should describe the situation as it exists today in Canada, and the Government is pleased that the provincial premiers expressed the same view during their meeting in Regina. Discussions are already in progress with provincial governments to ensure that the legal drafting conforms to that intention. There is no intention to change or to reduce in any way the role Her Majesty plays.

Secondly, the Government recognizes that the distribution of powers among federal and provincial governments is an essential part of the renewal of the Constitution.

The Government is prepared to begin the study of the distribution of powers at the same time as that of institutions and rights, and to give every aspect of the work a high and urgent priority. Discussions will begin at the meeting of First Ministers later this month.

However, the Government believes that proposals on institutions and rights can be dealt with more rapidly than the distribution of powers, and that action on the former should not be held up if prolonged discussion is needed to settle the latter.

The public hearings of the Task Force on Canadian Unity have provided a valuable forum in which ideas could be brought forward and discussed. The Government is therefore confident that the report of the Task Force will be an important contribution to the process of renewal.

In the course of the present Session, the Government will be introducing in Parliament a revised constitutional bill. With goodwill and flexibility on all sides, and with the shape of Canada's future at stake, the Government is confident that concrete progress will be achieved in the course of this Session.

Neither renewal of the federation nor the maturity of our national structure can be considered complete until the

achievement of an amending procedure permits our Constitution to be vested finally and entirely in Canadian hands. In co-operation with the provinces, the Government will again address itself to that question in the new Session.

#### *VI: Social Responsibility and Openness of Government*

The Government reaffirms its view that a renewal of faith in Canada requires an active and informed Canadian public.

It is therefore intended to continue consultations with business and labour, private interest groups, and other levels of government.

In addition, you will be asked to consider proposals to increase public access to government information.

In the further promotion of open and efficient government, a proposal will be placed before you to provide for the review by Parliament of evaluations by the Government of major programs.

You will also be asked to consider legislation to create a federal Ombudsman.

You will be asked to consider other legislative proposals.

*Members of the House of Commons,*

You will be asked to appropriate the funds required to carry on the services and expenditures authorized by Parliament.

*Honourable Members of the Senate,*

*Members of the House of Commons,*

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.

His Excellency the Governor General was pleased to retire.

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The sitting of the Senate was resumed.

### **RAILWAYS BILL**

#### **FIRST READING**

**Senator Petten** presented Bill S-1, relating to railways.

Bill read first time.

### **SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

#### **CONSIDERATION NEXT SITTING**

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform you that His Excellency has caused to be placed in my hands a copy of his Speech delivered this day from the Throne to the two Houses of Parliament. It is as follows:

**Hon. Senators:** Dispense.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, when shall this Speech be taken into consideration?

**Senator Petten** moved, seconded by Senator McDonald: