

*Constitution Amendment, 1987*

## "PART VI

## CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCES

50. (1) A constitutional conference composed of the Prime Minister of Canada and the first ministers of the provinces shall be convened by the Prime Minister of Canada at least once each year, commencing in 1988.

(2) The conferences convened under subsection (1) shall have included on their agenda the following matters:

(a) Senate reform, including the role and functions of the Senate, its powers, the method of selecting Senators and representation in the Senate;

(b) roles and responsibilities in relation to fisheries; and

(c) such other matters as are agreed upon."

14. Subsection 52(2) of the said Act is amended by striking out the word "and" at the end of paragraph (b) thereof, by adding the word "and" at the end of paragraph (c) thereof and by adding thereto the following paragraph:

"(d) any other amendment to the Constitution of Canada."

15. Section 61 of the said Act is repealed and the following substituted therefor:

"61. A reference to the *Constitution Act 1982*, or a reference to the *Constitution Acts 1867 to 1982*, shall be deemed to include a reference to any amendments thereto."

## General

16. Nothing in section 2 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* affects section 25 or 27 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* or class 24 of section 91 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

## CITATION

17. This amendment may be cited as the *Constitution Amendment, 1987*.

• (1130)

**Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the Parties as to debate, and I would like to thank Hon. Members for the courtesy they extended earlier this day. The House will know that this is an important debate. There was a great deal of effort expended by the constitution committee during the summer. It went to great lengths to bring in a report. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, it is a report on which the efforts of Members from all Parties were very well expended on behalf of the House and the people of Canada.

For those reasons I would suggest that we deviate from Standing Order 55(1) to the extent that the Member replying on behalf of the New Democratic Party would be allowed the same opportunity to speak at length as the Minister and the Member replying for the Official Opposition.

If you would put that to the House, Mr. Speaker, I think you would find there would be consent.

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, there have been consultations and we have agreed to that.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank Hon. Members for their courtesy and co-operation.

**Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a great sense of pride and history that I rise today to propose the adoption of

the Meech Lake Accord. The adoption of the Accord will fulfil one of the fundamental commitments of this Government as outlined by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in his August, 1984, speech at Sept-Îles when he said:

There is room in Canada for all identities to be affirmed, for all aspirations to be respected, and for all ideals to be pursued. I know many young men and women in Quebec will not be satisfied with mere words.

We will have to make commitments and take concrete steps to reach the objective that I have set for myself and that I repeat here: To convince the Quebec National Assembly to give its consent to the new Canadian Constitution with honour and enthusiasm.

This Government's commitment to national reconciliation results from a deeply held conviction that for the nation to fulfil its destiny, the Canadian family must be unified in a common understanding of shared values and aspirations.

This is the one hundred and twentieth year of Canada's Constitution. The passing years have witnessed the creation of a modern state which has proudly taken its place on the world stage. The dream of a nation spanning a continent, linking the Atlantic to the Pacific, the 49th Parallel to the North Pole, has become a reality.

If the result of that dream has been greater than our founders could have hoped or imagined, it is not for lack of challenges to our development or of those who would gainsay every tentative step forward. Our Constitution has not only withstood these challenges, it has grown and matured as has Canada. This is as it must be. A constitution must be a living document which encompasses and meets changing needs. Our Constitution has had the strength which comes from the flexibility and the vitality which comes from growth. The last 120 years have been marked by continuing refinements to our Constitution. The time has now come to take an additional but historic and important step.

While the 1982 Constitution Act was a significant achievement, it remained fundamentally flawed. To impose constitutional reform on any province and its citizens is to deny their rightful participation in Confederation and runs contrary to the spirit and history of constitutional development in this country. Canada is a partnership of its peoples and provinces, a partnership which can be willingly embraced but not imposed. This concept is understood and accepted by Canadians from coast to coast.

## [Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the Constitution provides the framework for the rights of all Canadians to participate and enjoy ready access. The Meech Lake Accord makes it better still by guaranteeing federal-provincial co-operation concerning shared-cost national programs as well as Senate and Supreme Court of Canada appointments. It acknowledges Canada's linguistic duality and Quebec's distinct character. The Accord provides for a future constitutional reform process by enshrining in the Constitution the holding of annual conferences of First Ministers to discuss economic and constitutional topics.