

*The Constitution*

panel discussions in Simcoe. Mrs. Edmonds and Mrs. Howes made their presentation to the special joint committee on a renewed Canada earlier today.

These are people who obviously care about their country and care about the future of our country. After all, they have taken the time and the effort to participate in this current round of constitutional talks.

It impresses me because I know the mood of Canadians. They are tired of this debate and a greater consequence is that they seem to be really fed up with what is going on with the constitutional talks. However, these people have proved that there are still many Canadians in this country who want the country to stay together. I am proud that they are willing to work to help keep it that way.

I believe that their views represent what the majority of Canadians want. They have not let the media or the academics or the politicians skew the reality that Canadians want a strong and united Canada. These Canadians are telling us what Canadians want and we should start listening.

We have had years of this debate. We know what the positions are. These Canadians are telling us that they want us to get on with it.

The constitutional meetings that took place in my riding in January discussed Senate reform, property rights, aboriginal rights, women's issues, Canadian agriculture, trilateral free trade, interprovincial trade barriers and youth issues.

However, the underlying theme of the whole convention was national unity and the importance of Canada staying together and being united. In order to achieve this, the panel concluded that we must all be prepared to compromise, specifically in terms of the issue of Quebec. It noted that in some instances it may be necessary to accept change and go along with things we do not really like in a compromise to preserve national unity. It is exactly the spirit of compromise that can get us through our current constitutional dilemma and guide us into the future.

The panel also recognized the distinct nature of Quebec's language and culture and its need to preserve and protect it. Most important, the panel recognizes that without Quebec there can be no Canada.

Without the French language and culture there can be no Canada. What concerned the panel the most was that Quebecers would not see that the majority of Canadians really realize that, and I hope my friends to my left in the Party Quebecois are listening to that.

Therefore I was pleased when Mrs. Edmonds and Mrs. Howes pointed out to the committee that when the media pays more attention to the defacing of a Quebec or Canadian flag than it does to covering the productive constitutional meetings like those in my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, it really does a disservice to this country.

I am happy to see that more and more Canadians will recognize this and this may in some way help influence how the media portrays what is happening in this country.

The committee also noted that it was very concerned about the regional economy, specifically the crisis facing Canadian farmers and the many who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector. Among the recommendations for a national economy was the importance of eliminating interprovincial trade barriers because "they hamper the prosperity and the freedom of all Canadians".

Women's issues were discussed by school principal Mary Lou Norman who noted that women still do not have a major role to play in constitution making. She stressed the importance of equality regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, colour or disability.

Graham and Shirley Smith, Oshweken residents of the Six Nations, told the constitutional panellists that land claims are the biggest issue for native peoples. However, they wondered how natives fit into the Constitution and the constitutional process. I quote: "There has to be a respect. There has to be a dialogue on both sides. There has to be a representation on both sides".

The streamlining of government services was a concern of city of Nanticoke mayor Rita Kalmbach, who told the panel that putting an end to the duplication of government responsibilities must be a high priority of any government. She also pointed out that the accountability and efficiency of government must be restored if the public is to have confidence in our government. I quote again from her proposal: "We need simpler