government has undertaken a variety of initiatives and has welcomed the initiatives taken by certain provincial governments.

[*English*]

We have an opportunity at this moment in history to create a modern, efficient and dynamic Canada for a new century.

The federal government has, therefore, started a process to revitalize the federation and to lead toward a new and modern Canada. As part of this dynamic process the citizens' forum is a specific federal initiative taken to ensure that we do work with Canadians, to listen and to understand.

There are a number of interesting comments on this forum every day in the media; some of them critical, some of them positive, some of them disparaging, some of them hopeful. I read this morning in the *Toronto Star* on page 2 a very interesting column by Slinger, I do not know his first name. It is entitled "Beleaguered citizens' forum at least offers hope".

• (1230)

I have to commend this column; it is eloquent and it points to the importance of our continuing with this, putting our faith in it and using it constructively. The citizens' forum, therefore, is a specific initiative taken to ensure that we do work with Canadians, to listen to and understand their concerns, their goals, their dreams, and also their frustrations. The Special Joint Committee on the Amending Formula, as the member from Niagara Falls reminded us a few minutes ago, will also provide an opportunity to hear their views and best advise on how to amend the Constitution.

People say that this is a technical subject. Of course it is, but if we come up with new values and new approaches, we need to have a mechanical, technical way to bring them about. That is why that committee is established.

It is true that the federal government, with the citizens' forum, shows a very non-traditional approach in listening to Canadians. The terms of reference indicate that the citizens' forum is not to wait for people to come to them but to seek out the views of Canadians; and once they come in, not to treat them in a stonily way but to encourage them to talk about Canada—this is very unique—and to stimulate suggestions about the country's future. This is a forum put in place to animate and bring alive what people feel. The federal government wanted this process to go to the people, not just to the heads of the big corporations, big unions, or big school boards, but to individuals in their villages, in their work places. This is happening. It is unique; it is non-traditional.

I am confident that The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future will go a long way to help us understand what this great country is about. I believe that the more Canadians talk to each other, the more they will realize how much they have in common and how much can be lost if we allow our differences to destroy our future together.

My daughter told me the other day that she sometimes thinks Canadians define themselves by what they do not like or who they do not like, rather than defining what they do like and what they do share. Other countries often can do this. I would like to see Canadians do this more. The citizens' forum is meant to encourage that, not to just restrict it to that. Of course frustrations must be vented, but also let us build common values together. It is an important and necessary step in the revitalizing process of this country.

Another initiative of the federal government in the listening process is the establishment of the Special Joint Committee on the Amending Formula.

[*Translation*]

As the Prime Minister said in his June 23 address to the nation, "we need to find an amendment process which reconciles the need for public participation and open democratic process with the legal requirements now in the Constitution."

The purpose of the committee is therefore to provide us with recommendations, based on broad consultations with Canadians, on a better way to go about changing our Constitution and, in particular, of involving the public in the process.

[*English*]

Although the federal government has presented a discussion paper to this committee, the paper did not make recommendations. Its purpose is to stimulate public discussion by raising a number of questions and examining a variety of options, without seeking to be exhaustive or suggesting any preferred course. I am confident that the ideas set out in the federal discussion