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Time for action towards renewal of the Canadian Federation

A new affirmation of the Canadian identity; a new definition of the principles which underlie the Federation; a new approach to co-operation among provincial governments; and a new Constitution are the specified requirements for a renewal of the Canadian Federation announced by the Federal Government on June 12.

In a document entitled A Time for Action Towards the Renewal of the Canadian Federation, presented to the House of Commons by the Prime Minister, the Government said it had launched a new and intensive effort in this regard. Highlights follow:

Affirmation of Canadian identity

Canada has made us what we are today and it has made us more alike than we may think. We share a history, a vast territory, a North American spirit, a sense of national solidarity, and the same democratic values. Other values should be brought into this consensus: linguistic equality, cultural diversity, the dignity of native peoples, and the self-development of the regions. We must not only accept that other groups in Canada may be different from our own, but also respect them for what they are. Friendship, solidarity and mutual respect among groups that wish to maintain their character are essential elements of the Canadian identity.

Our identity should therefore be based on respect for these differences and on the recognition that the principle of unity in no way implies uniformity.

Principles of renewal

The great debate on national unity has clearly indicated that most Canadians understand the need for renewal and are determined to carry it out. "In every generation, Canadians have had to rework the miracle of their political existence," said historian Arthur Lower; and so it is now, with our generation. This renewal must be built on fundamental principles reflecting the basic realities of Canada. The Government proposes the following guiding principles:

- The renewal of the Federation must confirm the pre-eminence of citizens over institutions, guarantee their rights and freedoms and ensure that these rights and

freedoms are inalienable.

- The renewal of the Federation must fully respect the legitimate rights of the native peoples, recognize their rightful place in the Canadian mosaic as the first inhabitants of the country, and give them the means of enjoying full equality of opportunity.
- The renewal of the Federation must guarantee the linguistic equality of its two major communities, the English-speaking and the French-speaking, and assure that Canadian institutions exist to help each group to prosper.

The Minister of Justice, Ron Basford, visited Queen Elizabeth in London on June 15 to tell her of the Government's proposals for changes to the Constitution. Mr. Basford was accompanied by Donald Thorson, the Prime Minister's constitutional adviser.

- The renewal of the Federation must lead to respect for cultural diversity and for the right of every citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, to equal opportunity. Every cultural community should be able to rely on the support of governments in preserving its own cultural heritage and in discovering and appreciating those of other communities.
- The renewal of the Federation must, in all fields, promote the self-development of regions by avoiding excessive centralization.
- The renewal of the Federation must lead to closer economic integration of the



Thirty-five years ago tomorrow...
Princess Margriet of the Netherlands was baptized in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa, by Rev. Winfield Burggraaff, a Canadian of Dutch descent.

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