

*The Constitution*

message to exchange with me about the historic and significant events which are before us. I said that the opportunities were not an exchange about party politics, but rather about identifying a common vision for our country and finding a sense of Canadian citizenship that we could all share and support.

I went on to say, and I say again, as most of us in this House know, that citizens are getting tired of hearing about the subject of Canadian unity I suppose and they wonder why we do not leave that subject alone and perhaps get on with the building of the economy, creating jobs and prosperity, cleaning up the environment and preserving the quality of life which Canada should possess in such abundance.

Truly those are the major goals that we all seek, but there is a foundation required on which all of our aspirations must be built and that foundation is a Constitution that fully reflects the values and the visions of all Canada's peoples.

I persevered and asked for the keen interest and earnest participation of my constituents over the months that were to come from the beginning of the release of these proposals. As we moved through them together, I believe that we commenced to learn and to understand them well.

We began to determine how we should best deal with them and hopefully we have come to a general consensus in many areas. There are certain areas of disagreement. In many cases there are people in my riding, as there are in every riding, who do not yet fully understand the proposals and those who understand them well and, frankly, oppose them because they do not appreciate the means by which we are trying to put this country together.

What really matters is that we did work at the process, as similar communities have done across this land and we are now realizing the achievement of a public opinion that is based on public involvement and a consultative process that has helped the decisions to be truly made by Canadians together.

As I said at the beginning, I undertook to my constituents that I would ensure their general views were delivered to this Parliament in some fashion, whether in total consensus or not and so I thank the House for the opportunity to do so tonight. I would also like to say I

have had the privilege of sitting with the joint parliamentary committee on a renewed Canada at which time, I also, by letter, expressed my views through the co-chair persons to the committee. I will summarize those views briefly.

First of all, the people of Fredericton—York—Sunbury believe deeply in the potential and in the sanctity of a unified Canada. It could be construed as virtually a unanimous point of view. There are many differing opinions about how we should achieve the unity of our nation but I do not think there are many citizens who are strongly opposed to keeping Canada whole. In fact, most citizens are strongly committed to keeping Canada whole.

I am also convinced that in our province of New Brunswick, which is Canada's only official bilingual province, there still does remain an abiding majority support for the linguistic duality of two official languages, both in New Brunswick and in Canada.

There are, of course, many citizens who prefer the perceived simplicity which they feel would exist with only one official language, English, and there are others who are concerned about unfair application of the Official Languages Act and about preferential treatment in government employment practices, but on balance, I do believe that most New Brunswickers take pride in the model which our province has demonstrated for the harmonious and effective living together of our people under the mantle of official linguistic equality. Personally I support those policies in all respects.

With respect to the proposal to recognize Quebec as a distinct society within the context of language, culture and civil law, I also feel that most of my constituents would accept this to be a reasonable reflection of Canadian reality. There are concerns that such recognition does not constitute preferential treatment over other Canadians and there are others who would strongly prefer not to see such recognition take place at all. Again, on balance, I am convinced and would judge the majority view of my constituents to be one of reasonable acceptance of the distinct society provisions as a means of reaching consensus for the unity of our country. Certainly I personally support that position. There seems little doubt that most citizens in New Brunswick and in my riding do share the vision that Canada must include the province of Quebec.