

And no one should underestimate the reaction in Quebec to a rejection of Meech Lake. I come from High River, but I consider it part of my obligation as a Canadian to learn something about nos compatriotes du Quebec, who were Canadians before we were. During the referendum campaign, I was the only English speaking Canadian, from outside Quebec, invited to come into the Province to campaign against sovereignty-association. One of the reasons Canada won that vote, and sovereignty-association lost, was because Pierre Trudeau promised, invoking my name and those of others, that there would be real constitutional change, to take account of the legitimate concerns of Quebecers who believe in Canada. The Constitutional Agreement of 1982 broke that promise, and caused many of those Quebec federalists to reassess their commitment to Canada.

Quebecers who have confidence in Canada believe the Meech Lake Accord is an action to respect the promise that let Canada win the Referendum debate. If Meech Lake is rejected, whatever the motive in Winnipeg or in Saint John's, many reasonable Quebecers will inevitably conclude that Canada does not want Quebec. And maybe there are some Canadians who don't - but there are millions more who do. We must understand - and not underestimate - the implications of our actions on Meech Lake.

None of this is said as a threat. You, Manitobans, will make your own decision. But I think I owe you my assessment of the stakes.

Let me conclude on a much more positive note, about where Meech-McKenna-Manitoba can lead us.

The country and the world are changing dramatically - indeed change is a constant in international affairs. A year ago, no one would have predicted the crumbling of the Berlin wall; or discussions of the end of apartheid between Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk; or the relatively new strength of international organizations, like the UN.

Those changes hold two broad implications for Canada. One is that they will inevitably require us to change our own behaviour - as new trading opportunities arise; as new environmental agreements require all nations to surrender some of their sovereignty; perhaps as the need for peacekeeping enlarges.

The other is that there are extraordinary opportunities for a country like ours - widely respected, both for our diplomacy, and for the way we marry a market economy with social justice; a country that is a model of tolerance and accomplishment. Those changes in the world, exciting in themselves, offer a particular promise to Canada. But we can take advantage of that only if we are working together, not pulling apart.