

Quebec question is "their top constitutional priority". The Edmonton Declaration says: "Then they will pursue further constitutional discussions, on matters raised, which include Senate reform." For our part, we will be ready with a practical proposal for Senate reform - whether the CBC reports it or not.

There are plenty of proposals to examine. In 1978, British Columbia and the Canada West Foundation proposed a reform by which provinces would name provincial representatives to a sort of "House of the Provinces", in place of the Senate. Alberta supported that in 1982 and then, after legislative committee hearings, changed its position and called for direct election. In 1984, a joint committee of the House of commons and Senate recommended a system of direct election which would give smaller provinces proportionately more Senators than populous provinces. More recently, there has been considerable enthusiasm for the so-called "Triple E" proposal, which involves direct election, and would give Prince Edward Island the same representation as Albert or Ontario or Quebec. That proposal would give the Senate what it calls "effective" powers, although it is not clear what those powers would be.

That is a pretty important question. If new powers are given to the Senate, they must be taken from somewhere else. Today, the House of Commons has the power to over-rule the Senate. Do the people who want "Triple E" want to take that power away from the House of Commons? If so, who resolves a dispute between a Senate and a House of Commons with equal powers?

If the House couldn't over-rule the new Senate, would the new Senate be able to over-rule the House of Commons? If so, wouldn't that mean that Senators from the six smallest provinces would have a permanent veto over the interests of Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec, or Ontario? Could a special billion-dollar payment to grain farmers survive such a Senate? Would a Senate like that, where power had no relation to population, be likely to stop an attempt to reform a FIRA, or eliminate an NEP? If it had the power, would such a Senate forbid Michael Wilson to cut the deficit?

Consider another possibility - namely that the new power of this "effective" Senate would not come from the House of Commons, but would instead come from provincial governments. That's what happens in the United States. Their Senate has more power, because their states have less. The United States system builds regional power into the Senate, because the US