

I believe what is required to understand the situation in 1991 is *perspective* -- not only geographical, which you possess living outside the country, but also historical.

As many of you know, Canada went through much of the same turmoil between 1864 and 1867, before the so-called "Fathers of Confederation" hammered out a deal. Canada's history since then has been characterized by numerous attempts to re-configure and re-constitute that original arrangement.

Will the passion in Quebec following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord result finally in the break-up of Canada? I think not. Even in Quebec, the polling trends indicate that the most hardened attitudes are beginning to soften, and that some form of Canadian compromise can be achieved.

Outside of Quebec, it must be understood that all premiers in 1987 supported the principles of Meech Lake, and even when the process failed in June 1990, an overwhelming majority of Canadians and legislatures still favoured the adoption of the Accord.

In typical Canadian style, we sent out an avalanche of commissions and task forces to see what went wrong -- in both process and content.

Recently, my predecessor in this portfolio, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, was given special responsibility for constitutional affairs and national unity, and after only a month he has begun to turn the tide of national opinion towards constructive dialogue and solutions.

We are an interesting bunch, but as students of this country you must realize that we are not crazy.

I can assure you that Canadians will opt for practical, equitable and far-reaching constitutional solutions which will allow this country to continue to develop and prosper and play an active and effective role in the world of the 1990s and beyond.

As students of Canada, I know that you are also excellent teachers, and I urge you during your time in our country to share your views with ordinary Canadians so that they can benefit from your wisdom and objectivity.

Canada is a great country and I thank you for your interest and for your assistance in helping us to plan our course for the future.