

11. Therefore, your Committee recommends that First Ministers affirm in a Companion Resolution that the operation of the fundamental characteristic clause, recognizing the linguistic duality/distinct society, in no way impairs the effectiveness of the Charter of Rights. As an interpretive clause it works with the Charter and does not override the rights and freedoms contained in it. Similarly, that Companion Resolution should affirm that the clauses providing roles for Parliament and the provincial legislatures do not accord legislative powers.

Your Committee also considered the New Brunswick proposal that every five years the Senate carry out an assessment of the results achieved by governments and legislative bodies in relation to the commitments in section 36 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* on equalization and reduction of regional disparities, and that a report be presented to the first annual Conference of First Ministers on the economy following each such assessment.

12. We see merit in the idea of the Senate carrying out an assessment of the results achieved in pursuance of the commitment on equalization and the reduction of regional disparities but we would recommend it be addressed in the context of a reformed Senate.

New Brunswick has also proposed an amendment that would require the House of Commons and legislative assemblies to hold public hearings before adopting any measures related to a constitutional amendment. This would include revocation of a constitutional resolution. Your Committee agrees with this idea. Under the amending formula adopted in 1982 legislatures and not governments have ultimate responsibility for approving constitutional amendments. This may seem like a subtle distinction but the lesson of Meech Lake is that the Canadian people want a say in the development of their Constitution.

13. We believe that, in a parliamentary democracy, public participation in constitutional reform can best be accomplished by means of public hearings by Parliament and legislative assemblies and we recommend such a process for Canada's future constitutional development.
14. Your Committee recommends that a Companion Resolution process that adds, without subtracting, to the provisions of the Meech Lake Accord has the best prospect of solving the current constitutional impasse.
15. Your Committee recommends the New Brunswick Companion Resolution, with the suggested changes and additions contained in our report, as the basis from which the First Ministers and the country can address the present constitutional impasse.