

*The Constitution*

that, that there really is a community of three-quarters of a million people here, the vast majority of whom have very little to do with the federal government and certainly nothing to do with the vision that the word "Ottawa" creates anywhere east of the Ottawa River or west of the Ottawa River, outside this region.

As someone who has grown up in this community, I can tell you that the sense of responsibility as the nation's capital and the sense of pride as the nation's capital is strong in this region. We have been proud to develop in our community the ability to deliver services in both official languages long before many communities across this country.

We have been proud to promote the diversity of cultures that are represented in our community and to give them means and vehicles to communicate with one another and with the community at large and to respect those diversities in the delivery of public services.

• (1930)

We have also recognized that we have a role to play in Canada. We have a role to demonstrate that here in the nation's capital many different groups from many different backgrounds, from the two founding language groups of this country and including our aboriginal people, can live in peace and in harmony and can make this a stronger and better community as a result.

Those feelings were all reflected in the responses we received to over 700 questionnaires. We asked people what was important to recognize about the nature of Canada. Almost without exception the rights and freedoms of individuals as recognized in the charter were important to people.

Second most important was the role of aboriginal peoples in Canada.

We drop down a bit then to the importance of recognizing the equalization of economic opportunities among regions; again a great commitment to the diversity of Canada, to our differences, but to our right to share equally in the wealth of the country.

Recognition of two official languages was important. The diversity of cultural heritage was important. The distinctiveness of our regions was less important. I think

that reflects a very strong bias in this community to the wholeness of Canada. Our diversity is important but less important than our wholeness.

People were asked how important they thought it was for the federal government to be able to set national policies and standards on certain issues. The environment was inevitably number one, with virtually 100 per cent saying that the federal government has got to be responsible for the environment.

We set up a special constitutional discussion in Ottawa West on the environment and the Constitution because people were seriously concerned that the constitutional proposals virtually ignored the environment. They were concerned about the impact of property rights, the federal government's ability and the ability of all of us to work together as individuals and as governments at all levels to protect our environment.

They were concerned that the proposal for the economic union ignored the whole concept of sustainable development, of integrating whatever we do economically with the protection of our environment and the preservation of our resources for future generations.

In only a few moments I cannot possibly do justice to the wealth of concern for our country and love for our country that I have heard expressed from the people in Ottawa West in the last year and more. What they are looking for is leadership. They are looking for us to put aside the differences that they feel are superficial to the continuity of Canada. They want us to make that our number one goal. They want that because Canada is important to them. They also want it because we have other issues we must get on with—and they want us to get on with them—such as child poverty, unemployment, developing Canada's scientific basis to create more and better economic opportunities in the future.

I know time is short, and so I simply want to conclude by saying that I share the view I have heard from the vast majority of my constituents. Certainly there have been diverging opinions and there have been some unpleasant opinions expressed, but they are all important and they all have to be taken into consideration.

For me, my country is not Canada without Quebec, and I am not a Canadian in a country without Quebec.