

*The Constitution*

January 8, there was a meeting at College Louis Riel which is in the northern part of the constituency.

At these town hall meetings, I heard comments such as the following. I want to share them with my colleagues here and my fellow Canadians who are listening. Here is one quote that came from one participant: "Having lived in many provinces as well as Africa and Europe, I have realized that Canada is a wonderful place to live and that it is rich in its variety of people". The person goes on to say: "In a community there is room for differences and acceptance that people do different things in different ways".

Those were some of the thoughts that were shared with me. I was also invited to speak at a number of schools. I realize, as I know a number of my colleagues do, that the Constitution is not only for ourselves, and those slightly younger or slightly older, but for our children and their children and those who will follow. I was invited to Collège Jeanne Sauvé on December 16, at George McDowell School on December 18, at the Nelson McIntyre Collegiate on December 19, at l'École Provencher on December 19, at l'École Louis Riel on December 19—it was a busy day—and at Pierre Radisson Collegiate on December 20.

[Translation]

At Louis-Riel College, the format was extremely interesting. Some students had prepared a number of questions to examine the three sections of the government proposals on the Constitution, from the document entitled *Shaping Canada's Future Together*. The students asked me numerous questions that I truly appreciated.

[English]

The students of George McDowell School, even though they were a bit younger, as I recall it was a junior high school, asked many interesting, pointed and challenging questions, and I salute them and extend my appreciation for their preparations as well. Also, there is a very special thank you that must go out to the students of the Grade 11 history class at Jeanne Sauvé school whose teacher, Hélène Roy, sent me the fruits of their deliberations.

[Translation]

These students also gave me their own suggestions concerning the Canada clause. Among the values that

they would like to see included in that clause are: the promotion of a sense of pride, belonging and unity within the Canadian pluralistic society; the promotion of tolerance among Canadians, regardless of their origins and differences; offering to all Canadians the possibility to develop their potential, wherever they live in the country, and to have equal access to employment, as well as equal treatment in the workplace; facilitating the development of the full potential of all aboriginal peoples in the aboriginal languages, and guaranteeing their total autonomy while respecting their fundamental rights as full-fledged Canadians.

[English]

I also held an open house in the constituency on January 11, and further, I distributed a questionnaire on constitutional and national issues in my fall 1991 householder.

There were, of course, people who were unhappy about certain aspects of the government's proposals and there was some criticism of the committee's deliberations, particularly in its initial stages. But generally, there were some positive remarks as well. I want to share some of those remarks with you and some of those views.

Let me deal first with the questionnaire. People rank Canadian unity within the first half of the issues that I brought to their attention. They really felt that it was something that was essential to us as Canadians. In addition, 86, almost 87 per cent, of those who responded were in favour of a Triple-E Senate; elected, effective and equal.

There was some significant concern expressed as to the meaning or ramifications of entrenching the distinct society clause in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. After debate and discussion, which brought forward many different opinions and proposed solutions, I think it is safe to say that a few general themes emerged among the constituents of St. Boniface. Many more Canadians, as are my constituents, are far more preoccupied with the present economic situation than with the Constitution. The lay-offs, the bankruptcies, the poor, the unemployed, the food banks are really a great concern to them. In fact, 64 per cent, just a few more, of those who answered the questionnaire felt that we should not be discussing the Constitution at this particular point in time because there were more pressing issues