

better future. I urge you all to gain a clear understanding of the decision facing Canada on October 26. What is more, I urge you to consider helping Canada to move forward, leaving the gridlock of the past 50 years behind and allowing Canada to evolve in ways that meet the needs of our people, now and in the future.

But let us say it is rejected. What do we do then? I cannot tell you what is going to happen then because we will be into a very uncertain situation -- a period of uncertainty that we would not have faced for many, many years.

That uncertainly would not be good for our economy, which you know is currently in a period of very slow growth after a major recession. I say that is an important risk to consider. The financial markets have indicated where they stand on the issue; it has resulted in a two and a half -- nearly three -- percentage point increase in interest rates from the lows of the end of the summer. That is the key thing that I think we should be keeping in mind here. If we are facing all this uncertainty, is it worth the risk? I do not think it is.

Some people say that if we rejected this deal, we could get a better agreement by sending the politicians back to the table. Reflect on that for a minute. What has every political leader, every Aboriginal leader, faced when he or she has gone back to his or her community after addressing the compromises that were part of the Charlottetown accord? Mounting criticism. Many Canadians who were calling for tolerance and compromise as the answer to the constitutional impasse a few short months ago find that they do not much care for the product of that process. In fact some positions are hardening as never before.

In such circumstances following a "no" vote, will those political leaders feel that they have a mandate to be still more flexible when they come back to the table for the inevitable next round? Anybody who thinks so is, in my view, misreading the realities of the political pressures that these political leaders are facing today, or is deliberately misleading the Canadian people for their own partisan purposes.

Some are suggesting, in fact, that a "no" vote would send a message to politicians that they are not to be trusted with the amendment of the Constitution. Sending messages to politicians is all part of the rough and tumble of electoral politics, but this is not an election. There will be elections enough and time enough to send real messages to politicians; that is what democratic accountability is all about, what elections are for. Everything I have seen convinces me that Canadians are taking this referendum very seriously, so I am confident that Canadians will not follow this advice.