

Thousands of hours of discussion and negotiation later, there are now some signs that consensus is probable. I know that the Canadian Jewish Congress has made important contributions to that progress by its well-considered briefs to various committees and working groups that have crisscrossed this country.

The process is not over and the stakes remain high -- no less than the very future of Canada. That, in itself, is sufficient incentive for all of us to continue to contribute every possible ounce of energy and creativity to the process.

I am often asked, especially by students, if we have contingency plans should Quebec separate. The answer is "no."

This Prime Minister, this Minister, this Government intend not just to keep Canada together but to lay the constitutional foundation for a stronger and more prosperous Canada for the future.

But there are others who also have an interest in the eventual outcome: the entire international community who rely on Canada's strength as a mediator, peacemaker and peacekeeper, who know Canada as a trusted trading partner or as a source of much-needed development assistance.

As I travel from country to country, meeting to meeting, to a person there is amazement that we would even contemplate the break-up of a country such as ours.

Canada internationally is a symbol of peace, justice, tolerance, prosperity and respect for human rights. Canada has led many of the positive changes that have taken place in the world in the 20th century.

Would it make a difference if there were no Canada? You better believe it.

Would a broken-up or broken-down Canada be the leading peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia?

No.

Would a broken-up Canada be asked to bring its wisdom to the Middle East peace progress?

No.

As citizens of Canada and as Jews, you have many difficult issues to address during the days and months ahead. I wish you strength and wisdom in your deliberations. And I pledge to you my continued support and the support of our government as together we search for those roads that lead to peace and stability in Canada and throughout the world.