

Adopting Meech Lake does not affect those measures, but rejecting Meech Lake, particularly if that is portrayed as an act against Quebec, virtually eliminates any possibility that Quebec would soften its position on the language law, or on the notwithstanding clause. If you want people to be flexible, bring them in, do not shut them out.

My final point has to do with who benefits from the adoption of the Meech Lake Accord. Some critics argue that this is an "Accord for Quebec". To be more accurate, it is an "Accord for Canada" - and yes, I believe that is in Quebec's interest, but it is also in Manitoba's interest, and in Alberta's, and in Canada's. For several reasons.

First, the exclusion of any Province from the Nation's constitution is a symbol of disunity; when that province has an "indépendantiste" tradition, it can become an invitation to separation.

Second, as a practical matter, leaving Quebec out prevents constitutional reform. That was demonstrated respecting aboriginal title. Quebec was out of the Constitution, so stayed away from the Constitutional Conferences on aboriginal title between 1983 and 1987. Its absence helped prevent reform. Quebec will continue to stay away from Constitutional Conferences so long as it is outside the amending formula. So would Manitoba, if Manitoba were the province left out. And, on many constitutional questions, the other provinces, even if they could mount a majority of seven provinces and fifty per cent of the population, would act without Quebec only at great peril to the country. So they would not act.

On issues where Quebec has an established veto - as many of us believe it does on Senate Reform - nothing would move so long as Quebec were outside the Constitution.

If you kill Meech Lake, you kiss good-bye to progress on Senate Reform, and on other issues where the country has to play with a full deck.

The third cost of rejecting Meech I referred to earlier. No one can quantify their reaction, but investors, domestic or foreign, would change their assessment of Canada if we revived the divisions of a decade and more ago.

Our ability to work for creative compromise in the wider world would inevitably suffer, if we had fundamental fissures at home.

The attentions of our governments would be diverted to problems of holding the country together, rather than reaching out to Canada's extraordinary opportunities in a world in transformation.