

is a member of the United Council of Filipino Associations in Canada.

Mr. Chairman, honourable senators, we are pleased and honoured to be invited by the Senate committee to deliver personally our presentation at this hearing and to discuss with you our views on the 1987 Constitutional Accord. The Canadian Ethnocultural Council is a coalition of 36 ethnic national organizations which, in turn, represent over 1,000 provincial and local groups, branches and clubs, and tens of thousands of volunteers from coast to coast. We address the needs and concerns of approximately eight million Canadians from all ethnic groups in Canada. We are a non-profit and non-partisan coalition, dedicated to working together for the purpose of furthering the multicultural reality of Canada, recognizing bilingual and multicultural Canadian society, aiming for equal opportunity, rights and dignity, thus ensuring equity for all Canadians in one united Canada.

One of our main objectives is to entrench multiculturalism firmly in the Canadian legal system. Canada developed into a bilingual and multicultural country, and that fact has to be respected by all Canadians, incorporated in Canadian laws, and recognized in the Canadian Constitution.

We are here today to endorse the need for the accord, especially as it relates to Quebec. We believe that the people of Quebec were protected by the terms of the 1982 Constitutional Act. The lack of their voluntary signature was a most unfortunate absence in that otherwise positive historical development in our country.

The Canadian Ethnocultural Council welcomes the 1987 Constitutional Accord that will allow Quebec to be a full partner in Canadian Confederation. We have expressed our sincere congratulations to the Prime Minister and all provincial ministers for their effort and vision in arriving at the accord. The spirit of such unanimity was rare in the development of Canada and deserves praise. We were pleased that the accord, signed on June 3, 1987, ensured the sanctity of the multiculturalism clause of the Charter. We have studied the accord extensively and have expressed our view that so reflects Canadian reality—linguistic duality and multiculturalism should be recognized in the same clause of the Constitution or the Charter of Rights in order to receive equal interpretation in the future. When we met with the Prime Minister he was sensitive to our concerns and gave us hope that there would be room for improvements in respect of multiculturalism, and pointed out that there would be parliamentary hearings to consider changes.

We felt that after all hearings the First Ministers and Prime Minister should meet again to consider the results of these hearings and to discuss and implement improvements suggested by provincial and federal parliaments and interested groups such as ours.

We were encouraged when we read in the Throne Speech that:

It is imperative that Canada's multicultural and multiracial reality be integral to all facets of our national life to

reflect the vital and distinctive nature of Canadian society.

• (1500)

It is our opinion that joining Quebec's signature to the accord should not override the interests of ethnic and linguistic minorities, rights of women and rights of native people.

I should now like to deal with some of the sections of the accord. I want to mention specifically our first recommendation. We believe that this country is fundamentally bilingual and multicultural. I believe all members of the committee agree with that. We therefore believe that both fundamental characteristics should be given equal protection in section 1 of the accord. Section 16 is not a satisfactory guarantee, although it was meant to be. What section 16 does is clarify that only the Charter will recognize multiculturalism and our cultural diversity, whereas the Constitution recognizes bilingualism. Our linguistic duality is, at this rate, above the multicultural aspects.

We support and endorse the concept of a distinct society in principle, and we recognize the necessity and importance of the inclusion of Quebec within the agreement. We also recognize the distinctiveness of Quebec primarily in its use of the Civil Code and in its being the main centre of French language and culture in Canada. We submit, however, that the distinctiveness of Quebec should not preclude the distinctiveness of other societies in Canada.

Second, we submit that it should not exclude Quebec from its obligation to maintain its own policy of multiculturalism. Whereas we recognize that it is not the intention of the accord as it is written, we recommend, to offset the possibility of these problems occurring, that the accord define the term "distinct society" and clarify that the Government of Quebec has the responsibility to preserve and promote the multicultural heritage of the province.

Sections 6 and 7 deal with the matter of immigration, and our two recommendations are intertwined. Our concern is that the federal immigration powers are being diluted in this accord. As a result, checker-boarding of immigration policies may result across Canada. As well, the method upon which agreements can be reached between federal and provincial ministers directly from one ministry to another circumvents Parliament and the general public. We feel that any agreement must be scrutinized by Parliament and the general public.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I turn to Mr. Emilio Binavince for further explanation.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Corn. Mr. Binavince, please proceed.

**Mr. Emilio Binavince, Member, Canadian Ethnocultural Council:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and honourable senators. Because of the extensive nature of the recommendations made by the council I wish to make specific comments that would invite honourable senators to consider specifically our recommendations relating to section 2.