

The Canada clause is another positive step for Canadians. It sets out Canadian fundamentals and principles. It will guide the courts in their interpretation of the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Many Canadians who are not Aboriginal or of French or English background—about a third of our citizens—have felt left out of the process and are concerned that they are not being appropriately recognized in this round of constitutional renewal.

Clause 2(e) states:

Canadians are committed to racial and ethnic equality in a society that includes citizens from many lands who have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the building of a strong Canada that reflects its cultural and racial diversity.

While it may not satisfy everyone, the racial and cultural diversity and equality are clearly identified and recognized. Could more have been done? Yes. But clause 2(e) is a good step forward, a part of the evolution of Canada, which is yet a very young country.

I am confused, though, by the different wording in clause 2(d). It states:

Canadians and their governments are committed to the vitality and development of official-language minority communities throughout Canada;

while clause 2(e) and other clauses only commit Canadians and not their governments.

Some have suggested that this may be discriminatory and may lead to a different interpretation and judicial weight, and have suggested adding the word "governments" to clause 2(e). I believe that in the context of the Constitution, "Canadians" includes governments. The people are the government. To clarify this confusion, I suggest that the word "governments" in clause 2(d) is superfluous and unnecessary and that it should be removed, resulting in all the clauses having the same force and weight.

Honourable senators, the main criticism I have of this constitutional round is the failure of our leaders to deal with the notwithstanding clause, which I believe to be offensive and undemocratic, especially in a fair and caring country like Canada. It has no place in a democratic society.

The only real purpose of a notwithstanding clause is the abrogation of individual or minority rights, which to me is unacceptable. If there are cases where individual or minority rights have to be restricted, provisions have been made in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The next time around, let us scrap this offensive clause.

Honourable senators, Canada is a wonderful land where tolerance and understanding are fundamental values respected by a wide majority of our citizens. Discrimination and racism will always be with us, but in Canada it is not and must never become widespread. The regular and frequent integration of races and cultures in our country is producing a new identity, the identity of the future, or, as I like to say, a race of mongrels, which in human beings is a most wonderful thing. All three of my grandchildren are what I lovingly call "mongrels"—a mixture of genes from different races, colours and creeds.

For their sake and the sake of your grandchildren, I will fight to keep this country together, because it is worth fighting for—the best that the world has to offer. Therefore, I urge all Canadians not to seek perfection but to accept the reasonable compromise reached by the leaders of our nation.

Honourable senators, in answer to the question that will undoubtedly come from my leader, the honourable Senator Murray, I intend to vote "yes" on this motion to concur with our colleagues from the House of Commons in approving the text of the referendum question, just as I will vote "yes" on October 26 on the referendum. I hope you all will, as well.

On motion of Senator Lynch-Staunton, for Senator Everett, debate adjourned.

The Senate adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.