

Having said that, this proposed Senate would not be an ineffective body, and I do not intend to depict it as such. First, senators would have influence on government through the very fact of their election by a vast number of voters. There is no doubt in my mind that this influence would grow as the new system became established.

Second, the veto over tax policy changes related to natural resources is a real power. Rarely would it ever be tested here, but it would be there as a constant reminder to governments of the potential veto in this area.

Third, the double majority required for legislation affecting the French language and culture is a real power, which makes it even more important in my mind that all senators be elected by the people.

Fourth, the Senate will be able to introduce legislation, as it is able to do now, but we rarely do it. I believe an organized effort at initiating strategically focused bills by elected senators could take on a new and important significance.

Fifth, the Senate would have a new role in ratifying appointments to senior government positions—which is not yet clear—that have a significant impact across the country.

However, there remains the serious question of all other so-called “ordinary” legislation.

A simple majority defeat or amendment in the Senate would trigger a joint parliamentary sitting process where the issue would be decided by a simple majority vote. The same would be true of a Senate bill in the House of Commons.

With a 337-person House and a 62-person Senate, it is hard to find a permutation or a combination under which the Senate view ever would prevail.

Honourable senators, I think our negotiators just ran out of steam when they got to this part. It does not make a lot of sense, except to those who admit that they succeeded in ensuring that senators could not overrule the House and produce messy situations for the government party.

I suggest that this was a serious misjudgment, but there will still be an opportunity to adjust it. Parliament itself must define the procedures, not just of the Senate but the process surrounding the operation of a joint sitting. How long would it take? When would it occur? How would it be organized? When would a vote be called? I suggest our Parliament can ensure a measure of balance in legislative influence for this new Senate if the will is there to do it.

Canadians certainly want changes to be made, and they want this atmosphere of constitutional crisis to end. With their instincts and their hearts, a majority of citizens all across this country want to vote for the unity of Canada. Yes, the process of negotiating the details of this umbrella constitutional agreement will go on between governments. It always does. It is a part of the process of governing in a federation such as ours.

Honourable senators, in the last seven years I believe we have been pushed down a path which has already led us beyond the status quo. We cannot simply stop this process and

start it up again at some distant day in the future without serious consequences.

Our country has been strained to the limit by these debates. A referendum defeat, in my view, would not produce a moratorium. It would produce, perhaps, irreconcilable division in Canada between provinces and between peoples that would have critical consequences for the economic and social health of our citizens who live, work, and raise their families on this magnificent territory. That truly would be a tragedy.

In spite of some of my reservations, I can only conclude that our country itself needs a victory in the referendum so that we can focus on the tough priorities affecting the daily lives of Canadians. We need to be able to think and plan with confidence for a secure and productive future in a united nation.

Because of this conviction, I support this motion. I will campaign for the agreement wherever I can be useful. And I expect all parties in this Parliament will fulfil their responsibilities to make the creative adjustments that will allow a new order of governing to work for Canadians.

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I am one of those who is not too enthusiastic about a referendum as far as it concerns our country, because it simply is not an integral part, or even a normal part, of the Canadian political decision-making process, unlike what we find in other countries such as in Switzerland and in many states south of us. Many can remember the referendum in Colorado on the Denver Olympics and the famous Proposition 13 in California. Ballots in many states this November will have questions on various issues.

However, this is not a normal process in this country. As a matter of fact, this will only be the third consultation of this sort. The first was on prohibition, and the result was so inconclusive that the then-Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, decided to let each province settle the matter individually.

The second was on conscription in 1942, a very divisive event in our history, a time when the country was already divided over the extent of its commitment to the war effort.

At the provincial level, we have had a number of referendums: For instance, the one in Newfoundland on joining Confederation in 1949; and of course, the most recent one in Quebec which was also very divisive, as Senator Chaput-Rolland has pointed out. I know families who are still affected by the tensions of that time. In particular, I know of one Quebec MP and his brother who have not spoken to each other ever since. This, I fear, is not an isolated case.

Quebec, historically, has constantly striven to protect its identity through the full exercise of the constitutional powers available to it. This is not a recent phenomenon. As a matter of fact, it goes back some 100 years when Honoré Mercier became premier of the province. Alexandre Taschereau, who was a dominating figure in Quebec for the first three decades of this century and premier during much of the 1920s and 1930s, had a constant preoccupation with the encroachment of