

# Statement

Secretary of  
State for  
External Affairs



# Déclaration

Secrétaire  
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**NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY  
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
TO THE  
ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN STUDIES  
IN THE UNITED STATES (ACSUS)**

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Affaires extérieures et  
Commerce extérieur Canada  
External Affairs and  
International Trade Canada

Canada

Three years ago today -- November 21, 1988 -- Canadians sent a clear signal to the world when they elected Brian Mulroney and the Progressive Conservative Party to a second consecutive majority government.

Canada and Canadians were changing. No longer were we content to hover along the 49th parallel making occasional sorties into foreign markets and foreign affairs.

Canadians wanted to be full-fledged players on the international scene -- first, by concluding a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the United States, and second, by increasing our influence and participation in the multi-nation "clubs" of the world through an objective that was loosely called "constructive internationalism."

Although Canada is only in its 125th year, it is one of the world's oldest democracies and has a unique point of view, one we wish to share with the world.

And the world, I must say, has encouraged Canada's participation, Canada's voice.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, my predecessor the Right Honourable Joe Clark, my colleagues, the Honourable Michael H. Wilson, Minister for International Trade, and the Honourable Monique Landry, Minister for External Relations and International Development, and myself play a part in some of the most influential organizations in the world -- the United Nations, the G-7, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC), among many others.

Canada is unique in its capacity to play a role across a large number of multilateral and regional organizations. In part, as a result, we have made valuable contributions to many of the breakthroughs that will surely characterize 1991 as a watershed year of this century.

Prime Minister Mulroney played an instrumental role in the establishment of the United Nations multinational force that quickly neutralized the aggressive actions of Saddam Hussein.

My predecessor, Joe Clark, was unswerving in his quest to end the intolerance and indecency of apartheid in South Africa.

Canadian Ministers for International Trade have been leaders in the battle for trade liberalization through the multilateral/General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and through regional and bilateral trade arrangements.

Monique Landry has continued Canada's fine record of humanitarian assistance to the world's neediest nations, and Canada continues

to provide one of the most generous and humane immigration and refugee policies in the world.

Canada is steadfast in its desire to safeguard the world's environment, and we are active participants in ensuring the success of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio next June.

In my own brief period as Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada has played a key role in major developments in the Soviet Union, the Baltic States, Yugoslavia, Haiti, and Cambodia.

As a strong proponent of international co-operation based on the rule of law, Canada has been unswerving in its support for the United Nations as a forum for discussion and negotiation, and as an instrument for world peace and security.

In fact, Canada invented both the art and the science of peacekeeping, and our acknowledged leadership in this field has led to even more numerous requests for our services from around the globe.

Canada has deservedly won the title of "honest broker" as evidenced by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's recent invitation to Canada to participate in the multilateral effort that will complement the next phase of the Middle East Peace process.

In short, the word "Canada" internationally has become synonymous with peace, justice, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

For this reason, Canada's current constitutional discussions are not simply a private matter where 26 million Canadians once again try to sort out their rules for living together.

Canada's future is a matter of importance for the entire world; since the unique Canadian experience has provided not only an example, but in many ways has established the principles and standards for civilized conduct in democratic evolution.

In many ways Canada is an experiment in democracy -- sometimes rational, often passionate, never clear-cut.

And Canadians are becoming ever more complex -- and that is why I'm not surprised that this 20th Anniversary Biennial Conference has over 500 participants in over 90 sessions!

In fact, the way we are going as a country right now, I wouldn't be surprised to see close to 1000 participants two years from now -- Canadian Studies is truly a growth industry!

After all, where else but in Canada could you find a jurisdiction like the Northwest Territories which elects a couple of dozen representatives from across thousands of miles of barren tundra, who then come together to choose their own government leader and Cabinet -- all without benefit of party discipline?

Where else but Canada would you find a province such as Prince Edward Island that is smaller than several federal ridings in Metropolitan Toronto and yet returns four members to the House of Commons?

Where else, except perhaps the Soviet Union, would you find two official languages, English and French, in addition to 10 major aboriginal linguistic groups comprising an additional 58 languages?

There are thousands of these arrangements from Newfoundland to British Columbia to the high Arctic!

But experiments with democracy and constitution-making in Canada are not new.

The history of Canada's constitutional development goes all the way back to 1663 when France established New France as a royal province under the "Edict creating the Sovereign Council of Quebec."

In 1763, when Canada was transferred to British rule, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 established a number of principles including those respecting civil government in Quebec and others related to relations with Canada's aboriginal peoples.

With the American Revolution around the corner, the British government attempted to maintain the loyalty of its new Canadian subjects by passing the Quebec Act of 1774 which authorized the use of French civil law, permitted the free exercise of Roman Catholicism, and affirmed the legal recognition of Quebec as a distinct society in North America.

A number of other constitutional milestones occurred before the eventual signing of the British North America Act of 1867 which established a new form of federalism based on responsible parliamentary government, and was the basis for the country we call Canada.

But Canadians wouldn't let a simple thing like nationhood stop their quest for the "perfect constitution."

And, besides, there was one embarrassing technical problem -- and that was the fact that the Constitution of Canada was a British Statute -- a matter that was not resolved for 115 years until the Constitution Act of 1982 brought Canada's Constitution home.

And even this so-called "patriation" was flawed by the fact that one of the major provinces, Quebec, refused to accept the terms of patriation.

As an act of national re-conciliation, our party and our Prime Minister pledged to do everything possible to bring Quebec back into the constitutional fold.

When the separatist Parti Québécois (PQ) was defeated by the Quebec Liberals in December 1985, the new provincial government replaced the 22 constitutional conditions of the out-going PQ government with five specific constitutional proposals. These proposals formed the basis for the so-called "Quebec Round" and an agreement in principle was reached with the federal government and all 10 provinces at a meeting at Meech Lake in April 1987.

But this is where the "only-in-Canada-constitutional-Catch 22" syndrome went into overdrive.

According to the arcane constitutional rules, some of the Meech Lake proposals required unanimity of approval by the federal parliament and all 10 provincial legislatures within a three-year time period.

But in Canada, governments have no fixed terms, and it is possible that one or all of the players who made the original agreement might not be around by the end of the three-year period.

And so a straightforward "done deal" became a lightning rod for a host of national, provincial, and local issues, and in June 1990, the Meech Lake Accord unravelled.

What followed was an emotional maelstrom and a political nightmare, as various interests and factions sifted through the entrails of Meech Lake, formed their own conclusions, and created new alliances.

Two new parties emerged -- the avowedly separatist Bloc Québécois and the Western-based Reform Party.

To make matters worse, Canada, along with the other countries of the industrialized world, experienced a major economic downturn after over six years of sustained growth, so that the traditional reinforcements between economics and politics provided an even more hostile arena for constitutional renewal.

Two significant consultative processes followed the failure of the Meech Lake Accord.

A technical one, the Beaudoin-Edwards Special Joint Committee examined the complex question of the amendment procedure.

A second, more populist group -- the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future led by Chairman Keith Spicer -- criss-crossed the country and gathered Canadians' views on important matters such as bilingualism, the place of Canada's aboriginal peoples, decision-making, the role of parties and their leaders, and numerous other topics.

As with most exercises in direct democracy, the process was messy, the views expressed were visceral, in many cases strongly worded and uncompromising.

In April of this year, the Prime Minister established a Special Committee of Cabinet -- of which I was a member -- to prepare a set of constitutional proposals that would respond to the concerns of Canadians and provide for the needs of future generations.

Again, the process was messy, the views expressed were visceral, in many cases strongly worded and uncompromising.

For five months we met in Charlottetown; in Quebec City; in Iqaluit; in Winnipeg; in Kelowna, British Columbia.

As we travelled across Canada, around the Cabinet table, and at the dinner table, we re-lived Canada's history, we pondered Canada's current condition, and we planned for Canada's future.

On September 24, we released our conclusions -- a set of 28 constitutional proposals called "Shaping Canada's Future Together."

As most of you I am sure know, they go to the very heart of Canada by addressing three basic questions:

- o Who are we and what values do we share?
- o What types of institutions do we need to respond to our collective needs? and
- o What is the best way to provide for a more prosperous future for all Canadians?

On the question of shared values, there is a section on "Shared Citizenship and Diversity" which deals with our fundamental freedoms; the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including the addition of property rights; a revision to the "notwithstanding clause," essentially a provincial veto, which makes it more difficult to invoke; and finally, a special "Canada clause" which outlines our shared vision and values, including a clear definition of what we mean by a "distinct society" in Quebec -- distinct in language, culture, and the civil law code.

This section also deals with the important question of Canada's aboriginal peoples, including self-government.

The second section, "Responsive Institutions for a Modern Canada," deals with overhauling our parliamentary institutions, to make them more responsive and more representative.

Central to these proposals is an elected Senate and less rigid party discipline in the House of Commons.

We have also introduced some new proposals involving the provinces in how Supreme Court judges are selected, as well as a proposal for Senate review of certain appointments such as the Governor of the Bank of Canada and the heads of federal cultural institutions, agencies, and regulatory boards.

Recent American experiences in this area will no doubt influence some Canadian thinking!

In the third section, "Preparing for a More Prosperous Future," we suggest a number of proposals to enhance our chances for prosperity including eliminating barriers to inter-provincial trade; a federal legislative power to manage the economic union; a re-deployment of certain federal powers to the provinces in areas such as training, immigration, broadcasting, and culture; a confirmation of exclusive provincial jurisdiction in certain areas such as tourism, forestry, mining, and municipal affairs; and the streamlining of certain programs by delegating certain powers such as drug prosecutions, some aspects of bankruptcy law, and wildlife conservation and protection to the provinces.

We believe that these proposals on the economic union are fundamental to Canada's future.

As I have indicated, one cannot separate politics from economics.

A strong competitive performance internationally enhances national unity, just as a strong, united country is a prerequisite for economic success.

And you, in this country, are not isolated from the fall-out of our constitutional deliberations.

A united Canada is clearly in the best interests of the United States. We represent your largest destination for exports and investments and a fragmented Canada would provide yet another instability for American capital and industry.

The importance of this economic relationship is not lost on the leader of the Parti Québécois who would like to establish an independent social, cultural, and foreign policy in an

independent Quebec, but still retain Canadian currency and other economic institutions and arrangements.

But the Prime Minister has made it clear that Canada is not a buffet where you take as much of what you want and leave the rest for the others.

And Quebecers are becoming more aware of the economic implications of separatism and are less willing to accept the "stiff upper lip," "I'm alright, Jack" platitudes of Mr. Parizeau.

Recent studies have shown that even without social and political disruptions, the costs to Quebecers would be high. But a Canada without Quebec and a Quebec without Canada would not operate in an environment of "business as usual."

It would be business as "unusual," and no one has even tried to estimate the true costs of separatism, once emotion and feelings are introduced into the economic equation.

And emotion is a part of democracy.

As the next step in the re-confederation process, we established a joint committee of the House of Commons and Senate to seek the views of Canadians on the 28 constitutional proposals. After an auspicious start, the Committee ran into some rough waters -- the process was messy, the views expressed were visceral, in many cases strongly worded and uncompromising!

After protracted all-party discussions, the committee is now heading back on the road to be supplemented by a series of five issue-specific conferences on:

- o the economic union;
- o citizenship and diversity;
- o the division of federal and provincial powers;
- o federal institutions; and
- o aboriginal constitutional matters.

In addition, some form of "summary conference" is being proposed.

Again, I expect the process to be messy, the views visceral, strongly worded and uncompromising.

But that's what democracy looks like up close, under the microscope.

In February 1992, the committee will make recommendations to the government which will then develop formal proposals for re-confederation.



This is not a story with a pre-conceived ending -- there is not a pre-written script.

But there are principles -- principles that guided us as we wrestled with hundreds of constitutional suggestions this summer -- principles that have guided Canada throughout its history.

In historic speeches in Toronto and Quebec City last February, the Prime Minister set the groundwork for any constitutional changes.

First, any changes must lead to a more prosperous Canada.

Second, constitutional changes must lead to a more efficient federation and a more competitive nation.

Third, we must be guided by fairness -- a Canada that respects not only diversity, but also the equality of its citizens.

Fourth, changes must be practical and not restricted by "stale dogma or tired ideology."

Fifth, we must maintain certain national standards, such as our health care system and our system of portable pensions.

Sixth, we must move decision-making closer to the people and involve the people more in the decision-making process.

And finally, the rights of all Canadians must be safeguarded.

There is no hidden agenda -- and there should be no surprises to you. Because these principles also characterize the face of Canada to the world -- a Canada that you and your colleagues have chosen to study in all of its unique aspects.

We welcome your interest in our country, your research, and your ideas.

And we welcome your scholarship and your friendship.

In the months ahead, we have much work to do as a nation. But Canadians have always been equal to the challenge.

We are a stubborn but hardy lot, and we still have many lessons to learn ourselves. But we have much to teach the nations of the world as well.

And we will. Strong, proud, and united.