

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, December 8, 1997**

7:00 p.m.

Date: 97/12/08

[Mr. Speaker in the chair]

head: **Government Motions**
National Unity

23. Moved by Mr. Klein:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be guided by the input received from Albertans during the public consultation process, Dialogue on Unity, and on behalf of the people of Alberta concur with the principles embodied in the elements of the Calgary framework, recognizing that the Calgary framework is not an amendment to the Constitution acts of 1867 to 1982 and that the specific wording of any amendment to those acts must be approved by Albertans in a referendum in accordance with the Constitutional Referendum Act.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table with the Assembly over 300 responses to the unity questionnaire completed by the constituents of Calgary-North Hill and also the results of the roundtable discussions on unity held at the Thorncliffe-Greenview community hall on Saturday, November 8, 1997, one month ago.

Members of the Legislature, it is an honour and a privilege to be standing in my place in this Assembly representing the constituents of Calgary-North Hill on the issue of Canadian unity and the Calgary declaration. Firstly, I would like to thank the many people who have taken the time and effort to participate in discussion with me. I've had the opportunity to exchange ideas, concerns, and opinions with a great variety of people throughout the province, and I've talked to residents as well as businesspeople throughout the constituency. Almost 100 people attended a constituency roundtable held jointly with the hon. Minister of Economic Development in conjunction with the Calgary-Foothills constituency, and lastly over 300 North Hillers responded to the unity brochure. These are ordinary Albertans, Mr. Speaker, from all walks of life, and I've listened to opinions that run from one end of the spectrum to the other.

Some questionnaires stated: we should be addressing other concerns, such as health and education. The triple E Senate was very popular. Other people supported the framework in its entirety and hoped that the discussion would keep going full steam ahead until a resolution is adopted. Many of the participants expressed their great appreciation for the opportunity to voice their opinions and thoughts and requested that public consultation regarding unity issues be continued into the future.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it's my responsibility – indeed I promised the constituents of Calgary-North Hill – to inform this Assembly of the favourable opinions expressed by them as well as the qualifications and problems they identified as important to them. Participants seemed eager to talk about the issues as well as to offer some solutions to the unity debate, and I quote:

Many know nothing of the Quebec act of 1774 and of its terms which gave the conquered French the right to retain language laws and customs. We are always hesitant about the unknown and ignorant attitudes stem from a lack of knowledge and understanding. Let's begin now to teach about Canada and to talk

about Canada in our schools. Let's learn about our differences and celebrate those differences. Let's sing 'O Canada' every morning in schools and sing with pride.

She suggests that we should study about our great Canadians past and present and let ordinary Canadians get involved in the process and educate our youth in the glory and wonders of this great country.

Most participants in this exercise also expressed enormous pride in Canada. I quote from a gentleman on 17th Avenue N.W. "Would I lay down my life for my country? Yes." Another said:

It's a great privilege (to be Canadian) that could only be diminished if Quebec left. Keep Canada together for a better, stronger, financially prouder future. We need to build on unifying issues.

Still another said, "Each province has unique and special cultures which need to be preserved." And my personal favourite:

Since I choose to be Canadian, it is something I am very proud of. I love this whole country [with "whole" underlined] and think we are blessed to live here despite the weather.

Most importantly, the majority of surveyed Calgary-North Hill constituents, ordinary, everyday Albertans, told me that any legislation must – must – ensure equality for all provinces, and any declaration or constitutional amendments must include equal power, rights, opportunities, and responsibilities for all.

Nearly 300 survey responses from Calgary-North Hill constituency were received by my office, and I personally read each and every one of them, some of them several times. Some were one-word answers. Others were nine pages long with detailed comments and suggestions. Four percent did not address the unity issue but raised other concerns, and 12 percent rejected the declaration outright. Twenty-one percent of the respondents accepted the proposal unconditionally, and the remaining 63 percent of the respondents endorsed the declaration but with certain conditions clearly outlined. Therefore, an overwhelming majority, 84 percent, of North Hillers were in favour of supporting the Calgary declaration overall.

However, Mr. Speaker, 33 percent of the respondents rejected point 5 outright. Another 30 percent stressed that equality of power and rights for all provinces is essential to the agreement. Opinions and beliefs which were expressed and explored in depth at the roundtable meeting reflected the concerns raised in the survey. Equality is the key. Nearly two-thirds, 63 percent, of the respondents identified equality as their overriding concern: "As long as we don't let uniqueness become more important than equality, it is a beginning. Equality is the key." Another said that we should implement a Canada-comes-first policy. Thirdly: "All Canadians are equal. We demand that this equality be given the respect that is due."

Many respondents, Mr. Speaker, expressed concern with statement 5, which addresses the issue of uniqueness. Some responses were:

Don't minimize the serious challenges facing a Canada increasingly fractured into groups more intent on preserving their distinctiveness than contributing to our nation's well being . . . It is nonsense to affirm that Quebec's culture and its tradition of civil law is fundamental to the well being of Canada. While we may enjoy that uniqueness, or find it interesting and want to see it preserved, the statement is not honest.

And

the character of Quebec society . . . is fundamental to the well being of Quebec but not to the rest of Canada. Likewise the unique character of Alberta society is fundamental to the well being of Alberta, but is not fundamental to the rest of Canada.

And lastly one lady said:

Albertans are and Alberta is as different from the rest of Canada as Quebec is. Let's have a little recognition of our distinctive-

ness . . . I can live with the framework if you have the gumption to stick with the equality provisions.

Points 1, 2, and 6, the equality clauses within the framework, must be solidly adhered to for the framework to receive continued support from the constituents of Calgary-North Hill. I think I heard that loud and clear, and I hope I'm saying that loud and clear to this Assembly.

Respondents also expressed concern over the rights of minorities within Quebec, including those of the English and native communities. The sign law, Bill 101, was a source of irritation to many people, and some noted that the rest of the country was bilingual. I assume that was irony.

Numerous respondents advised that the cost of separation to Canada and Quebec should be clearly stated for all Canadians to see. There was frustration and concern that the people of Quebec were not as yet involved in this process, and several respondents wondered what the federal government's response to the Calgary declaration might be.

As well, many people mentioned the issue of aboriginal rights and land claims, and most of these people felt that it was important to the well-being of the country for aboriginal issues to be settled fairly and promptly. Some mentioned that we all come from immigrant stock unless we are native Canadians, and interestingly, one philosophical respondent wondered if First Nations peoples would characterize diversity as a gift.

Mr. Speaker, I personally feel very strongly on the issue of Canadian unity. I was born in Goose Bay, Labrador, and moved to Bagotville, Quebec, for five years. My youngest sister was born in a small town in Quebec named Arvida, and my family has lived in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Charlottetown, and Germany. I've lived in Frobisher Bay; Yellowknife; London, Ontario; Ottawa; Edmonton; Calgary; and Cold Lake, Alberta: from one end of this country to the other. My observations are quite straightforward. My observations are that cultures are different, religions are different, races are different, but the overriding theme is that people are people and all people seem to share common aspirations and dreams about their country. They dream about tolerant societies with many freedoms, and they dream of a society that is caring and compassionate towards all people. They value and appreciate a society which champions freedom of speech, freedom of choice and movement, political stability, law and order, security in social and health programs, and equal opportunity for the growth and development of all citizens.

I believe – and it seems my citizens agree – that the Calgary declaration possesses the potential to set the tone for future discussion. As a framework we see the declaration capable of facilitating a crucial process, one of exchanging ideas, defining particulars, and creating an environment in which resolutions of benefit to all Canadians spring forward in the spirit of co-operation, collaboration, and respect.

The majority of participants from Calgary-North Hill constituency believe the Calgary declaration as an expression of commitment to Canada and the equality of all peoples provides a good starting point to that process. Many of us in Calgary-North Hill are committed to getting on with the work, the responsibility, and the privilege of taking care of Canada.

I'd like to close, Mr. Speaker, with one last quote from a Calgary-North Hill constituent.

It would be a very said day if Quebec were to separate from Canada. We need Quebec and Quebec needs the rest of Canada. It is important that Quebec's voice be heard, but they must also realize there are many "distinct societies" within [this country]. To separate from Canada would mean to weaken a strong link.

Together we can be strong and make a difference in our world. A Canadian has freedom, opportunities, rights and responsibilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The unity initiative in Edmonton-Mill Woods allowed me to meet many constituents. Many I met in person. Many more I met through their written comments. I met those so angry that they resented this whole project. I met those who lashed out at immigrants, multiculturalism, Quebec, the provincial government, and the federal government. I met those who resented the money being spent on this project. I met the skeptical who heartily distrust politicians to act in anything but self-interest. I met those so cynical that they scoffed at the naivety of those of us who would search to renew Canada seriously. I met those so mired in personal struggles that they could concern themselves with little else. These constituents were a small minority.

7:10

I also met the majority. I met those who so loved this country that they would accept almost any framework that would keep us together. I met those who painstakingly struggled over the wording of the framework, searching for just the right words that would make it acceptable. I met those rooted in the history of our country who reminded me of our obligations to those who have died to keep this place safe. I met those ready to embrace other Canadians, regardless of race, colour, creed, or personal circumstance. I met those immensely proud of Canada's role as a world citizen and a peacekeeper. I met those fiercely loyal Canadians who will accept nothing but success in this our current search to renew our country.

Over and over again I met those with a passion for this country who used the words freedom, equality, tolerance, morality, opportunity, and democracy to describe their Canada. How these people I met felt was neatly summed up by constituent Ivy Lafebvre. Ivy wrote: "My Canada would have no provincial licence plates. Our plates would be all 'Canada!'."

As constituents worked through the seven elements of the framework, they immediately confronted the problem identified by Jeremy Webber in *Reimagining Canada*. Webber warned against such a shared-values approach. The approach, of course, is beguiling. It sounds so rational. Why not identify the values Canadians have in common? Why not think about what makes us Canadians? Why not think about what we have in common? Why can't we just identify this national character and state our national objectives?

The reason that this approach falters, as we discovered and Webber explains, is that focusing on what is common necessarily pushes minority groups to the margin. The prism of a shared set of values may not be the way we think about our country. Perhaps a basic characteristic of Canadians is that we all think about our country in different ways. Seeking a long list of shared values, then, runs the risk of placing unnecessary tests of allegiance upon our citizens.

Certainly the use of the terms "equal" and "equality" in elements 1, 2, and 3 provoked comment. The assigning of a special element to Quebec made it very difficult for many to embrace the entire framework without reservation. Webber does, however, acknowledge that there is a need for a short statement of what the country values and that an abbreviated list may point

the way to successful future adaptation of the framework.

The comments from constituents underlined how powerful one underlying metaphor of Canada has permeated our thinking and makes solving the problems of national unity so much more difficult. We have accepted the image of Canadian cultural relations articulated so many years ago by Lord Durham. Durham wrote in referring to our nation, "Two nations warring in the bosom of a single state."

The metaphor has been popularized in our time by Hugh MacLennan as he spoke of the two solitudes. Webber reminds us, however – and we forget – that MacLennan drew the phrase from a letter from the German poet Rilke not as a metaphor of isolation but as a metaphor of love. Rilke's full sentence is, "Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect, and touch, and greet each other." The metaphor captures the tension between our individuality, on the one hand, and our ability to share with each other on the other, a process involving some loneliness and some independence. Nationally it means that people can live together, can share, without surrendering their own uniqueness.

The framework focuses heavily on the outlining of rights. What seems to be lost is the other half of holding rights, the assumption of responsibilities. One would hope that those charged with refining the elements would look seriously at the balance in the framework between rights and obligations. Obligations listed are those of the provincial and the federal governments, and they seem to be almost part of a turf war. Nowhere in the document does one find mention of the responsibilities of us as citizens. Where can we find statements, such as those found in the universal declaration of human rights, that everyone has duties to the community? In element 1 we find that our rights are protected by law, but what are our obligations? We find that provinces in the framework may be equal in status, but what are the obligations of those provinces? We find listed that aboriginals and cultural groups have rights, but again, no mention of their obligations. This appears to be a major omission in the framework.

That the elements of the framework need re-examination is not surprising. No one, I think, expected otherwise. What is encouraging is the overwhelming willingness of citizens to support the framework. They may quarrel with some of the elements, but there is solid support for the concept. Perhaps they recognize, as John A. Macdonald did in 1865, that

if we do not take advantage of the time, if we show ourselves unequal to the occasion, it may never return, and we shall hereafter bitterly and unavailingly regret having failed to embrace the happy opportunity now offered.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The chair would like to now call on a real first Canadian, the hon. Member for Athabasca-Wabasca.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour and a privilege to stand before you and my colleagues in this Assembly to discuss the issue of national unity and what it means to Albertans to be Canadian. [remarks in Cree] I'd like to welcome all of you to Canada.

I would like to begin, first of all, by thanking the hon. Premier Klein for leading not only Albertans but all Canadians towards these discussions on the future of our country. Mr. Speaker, by clarifying Alberta's vision on what it means to be Canadian, we can demonstrate what this country means to us. We have a unique opportunity to create a force for change that has the potential to meet the aspirations of not only Albertans but all other regions of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank and commend the leaders of all three political parties in Alberta, who have worked towards this goal through nonpartisan processes. We have shown that we can put aside our personal politics and band together to strengthen our nation's ties. It is actions such as these that will ensure our children and our grandchildren will live in a strong, united Canada.

7:20

To be successful at the provincial level, the federal system must respond to the needs and desires of our diverse population, one that appeals to Albertans, aboriginals, Quebeckers, and all Canadians alike, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. Only then will we have a country that allows all Canadians to pursue their dreams in a united country that we all call home. Mr. Speaker, I believe that Alberta's ability to encompass diversity can serve as a model for this issue.

I would like to talk about Alberta's aboriginal population, Mr. Speaker. Long before new settlers arrived on Canadian shores in the 17th century, aboriginals lived largely in co-operative social structures complete with governing powers and justice systems. The aboriginal communities each chose their own leaders according to their own traditions and followed rules that legitimized the unique institutions, but in 1830 the British introduced the reservation system as part of the treaties, and the aboriginal system of government was banned. Since that time, aboriginal people have been trying to find their place within the federal system.

The Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. David Hancock, recently pointed out that we have something to celebrate here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. As a province we are taking real steps towards aboriginal self-reliance and self-government. He went on to say that aboriginal people have made remarkable contributions to Alberta's history, from the early days of the northwest to their role in continuing to form the Canada of today. Aboriginal people from all walks of life, including prominent business figures, entertainers, and professionals, contribute to Alberta's unique character.

When we hear the term "aboriginal government," we often think of a community of First Nations with their own government, with status similar to that of a third level of government. Here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, we have a form of aboriginal self-government that I am very proud of. Aboriginals in Alberta also have representation at all levels of government. As an example, three Members of this Legislative Assembly of Alberta are aboriginal: myself, Yvonne Fritz, and my colleague the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake. In addition, many incorporated municipalities, particularly in northern Alberta, have elected aboriginal representation. These aboriginal people are Reeves, school trustees, and town councillors. In addition, we are the only province in Canada which recognizes the Métis settlements and the Métis people.

In 1990 the Alberta government passed the Metis Settlements Act, which provided a structure and a system for local government on the settlements which combines conventional aspects of municipal government with the unique characteristics of the Métis. It is through these partnerships with the Métis settlements that Alberta continues to assist the Métis towards greater self-reliance within our province and within Canada. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we also have the Métis framework agreement with the Métis Nation of Alberta, which also allows the Métis Nation and their members to work towards self-determination and self-sufficiency.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, we have a spirit of co-operation, compassion, equality here in Alberta, and it is with this spirit that

we are formulating Alberta's vision of Canada. I am confident that this vision can expand to include all Canadian diversities, including Quebec. Canada is a country which unites both national solidarity and regional autonomy. By recognizing and celebrating our differences and practising tolerance and openness between different communities, Canada serves as a model to other countries. As residents of this country, it is our responsibility to put forth an honest, informed effort to sustain our country as a prosperous, peaceful, progressive nation and a thriving industrial democracy that is the envy of the world.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not only is it my duty to speak to the unity resolution on behalf of my constituents, but it is also an honour and a privilege. In preparing my speaking notes, certainly I also reflected on my personal feelings, and those feelings over time have followed a string of contradictory positions.

On Tuesday, June 14, 1994, my wife and I were present during question period in the House of Commons. When it came to the first question by Preston Manning, he rose and spoke these words:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by welcoming the Prime Minister back home and thanking him for his moving representation of Canada at the D-Day ceremonies.

At this point all members of the Reform party, joined by members of the Liberal Party, stood and applauded for a lengthy period of time. It was a spontaneous gesture, and the emotional impact literally swept through the galleries. The Prime Minister had been at the shores of Normandy to honour the sacrifice by Canadians: deaths, lifetime injuries, emotional trauma, and the scarring impact on their Canadian families and friends. He represented all Canadians from all provinces and the territories.

There was also dishonour in the House of Commons that day. During the event that I have just described, all members of the Bloc Québécois did not rise, did not applaud, many conversing amongst themselves or reading papers. But worst of all was the repulsive smirking by many of the BQ members. It was a day and an event that I will never forget. I can also say unequivocally that I will never forgive the shameful behaviour by the BQ members on that memorable day. When I looked back on that event over the following months and years, I experienced a spectrum of emotions that ranged from anger to frustration to disbelief to denial. The reality is that when my constituents and my colleagues express their views, they also represent a collage of experiences, beliefs, and feelings.

Mr. Speaker, I could dwell on unpleasant past experiences and the past failures of the unity initiatives; however, the issue before us today is the future and not the past. Unequivocally, my constituents support the Calgary framework that was developed on September 14. In this connection I am tabling 321 replies.

To the first question, "Overall, do you support the framework?" 74 percent gave an unqualified yes. A further 16 percent also said yes but stated some form of qualification in their answer. In terms of the elements they liked, number 2, that states that "All provinces, while diverse in their characteristics, have equality of status," was clearly the first choice. This was followed closely by element 1, and element 6 was a distant third.

In the identification of concerns there was only one that clearly emerged, and that was number 5. Thirty-three percent of the yes replies identified concerns surrounding the unique character of Quebec society and in many cases were questioning the role that

the Legislature should take to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my congratulations to the Premier, to the Leader of the Opposition, and to the leader of the New Democratic Party. It was their combined leadership that recognized and understood that this was truly a nonpartisan issue of vital importance to the future of all Albertans. We are at the threshold of an event and a process that, combined with goodwill and meaningful discussion, will hopefully resolve the unity question. We owe it to our children, and equally important, we owe it to the tens of thousands of lives that have been given to protect our great country, Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

7:30

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise this evening to speak to the motion. At this time I would like to table four copies of the Edmonton-Centre and Edmonton-Norwood unity consultation joint report and, as well, 445 Dialogue on Unity submissions.

The Constitution is a passion with me. I followed the various constitutional debates and rounds since the early 1980s. I think it was the idea of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that most captivated me as a young woman. I'm fascinated by the process of creating a written document that is an embodiment of a nation and its ideals. I've responded to other constitutional debates and was honoured to be one of those chosen to participate in one of the five constitutional conferences on shaping Canada's future in 1992.

As part of my duties for this Dialogue on Unity I spoke with constituents on the phone, read the mail, and held a drop-in consultation one evening at my constituency office, but by far the most illuminating was a joint event held by myself, as the MLA for Edmonton-Centre, and the MLA for Edmonton-Norwood. We used a relatively new process called deliberative democracy. We invited individuals who had not completed a unity questionnaire and had not intended to respond, but they did express a deep concern about the unity issue in spite of their lack of participation to date.

Deliberative democracy is a term used to describe a process seeking a more effective means of involving people on important policy decisions. The problem with traditional methods of consultation is that people have little information and little opportunity to formulate a considered opinion on public issues. The intent of the deliberative process is to create an alternative environment where participants are exposed to the same information and have an opportunity to share their views before committing themselves to a position. The process is based on two principles: to reflect a cross section of the population and to create a meaningful forum for informed discussion.

We had three presenters give of their time to convey their knowledge about specific aspects of unity and the consultation: a university political science professor speaking on constitutional issues, a former Quebecker on what Quebeckers wanted, and a newspaper columnist on individual rights issues. Independent moderators – and I believe they have joined us here this evening in the gallery – Lydia and Don from Market Response guided the session. Both MLAs were present but did not participate in the discussion. We felt strongly that the forum was to seek the views of the constituents and should not be unduly influenced by politicians.

To begin, I need to validate the initial concerns brought by participants. All the participants supported the framework for discussion on Canadian unity. They said it was a good first step to real dialogue, but on its own it was not enough. It was too narrow and did not give people enough opportunity to express themselves and to really understand and delve into all the issues and ideas. As well, they wondered whether they would be heard.

Four overriding areas of discussion emerged over the course of the day: equality, diversity, and working together; Quebec and recognition; federal/provincial powers; and process and accountability. Under equality, diversity, and working together, I'd like to convey what the participants had to say. The concept of equality of opportunity, diversity, and levels of government working together were the elements of the unity framework that had the highest appeal. They said these principles were reflected most in elements 1 through 5 and in element 7. However, they suggested changes to element 3.

As it currently read, they did not believe that Canada was "without rival in the world" as to how it handles diversity. Past experience on minority issues – for example, aboriginal and women's rights – made this statement unreflective of reality. Secondly, they felt that the statement itself could be a barrier to change in Canada because it suggests that there are no problems. Furthermore, participants believed that their individual and cultural rights were more likely to be protected by a process of interpretation and resolution of issues in which they could be involved, rather than just relying on the legal protection of the Constitution.

The second area was Quebec and recognition. Again I quote from the proceedings.

Participants were concerned about two aspects of the Quebec question: the relative role of the provinces and the federal government – i.e., whether "special powers" for provinces would create more decentralization; and the impact of special language laws on the rights of individuals in Quebec.

Participants empathized with Quebecers and supported their right to their language as they supported other groups' rights. They equated language with culture and said that the French language should be recognized throughout Canada and not just in Quebec. They also said that this could be accomplished better through a recognition strategy rather than a regulatory one; i.e., a social rather than a legal approach to the problem. This would include promoting and developing ideas such as exchange programs with Quebec, unity airline fares across Canada, support for French theatre and arts across Canada, to reduce barriers. As one participant said, French-speaking Canadians needed special recognition because they had some special considerations.

As MLAs hosting this consultation, the Member for Edmonton-Norwood and I found these statements interesting and encouraging. These sentiments came forward after the acquisition of greater understanding of the issues from the experts and the discussion with others. These people felt that they had insight they didn't have before. In the end, they were willing to recognize that Quebecers needed special recognition because they had special considerations.

This concern over Quebec and unique status is at the heart of the debate we are having in Canada. I think we can safely say that a large minority of responses we received from the mail-in respondents expressed a concern over Quebec being granted anything perceived as extra or special, yet when we had participants together for a day to get specific information and a chance to debate the issue, the group was clear that special considerations were not inappropriate.

I think this brings forward two issues. One is the need for education, and the second is the understanding or misunderstanding of equal and equality. The first issue is the larger discussion about public consultation on so critical an issue and the need for specific, wide-ranging information. We don't always get the right information or the most thoughtful information or get both sides of the story.

The following two quotes from different respondents sums up the issue. One person said:

I feel very strongly Quebec has created a distinctness that enhances our country as a whole as has every other province and should not be entitled, nor is it owed any special circumstances. We are all unique; no one group deserves special treatment.

Another said:

It is vital that the public be educated with regards to the wants and needs of various regional groups. The adversarial position vis-à-vis Quebec is not productive, nor is it tolerant. The first step in this process should be education. There are far too many myths held about Quebecers and the East.

If I might inject a personal note, I agree with the latter. More education is critical if we are to face a referendum in this country. People make better decisions if they have all the information.

I'd now like to comment briefly on our understanding or misunderstanding of the terms "equal" and "equality." According to the dictionary, equal means "to represent as equal; [to] match; to cope on equal terms with." In other words, there is an assumption that the starting condition is equal, and therefore one may treat all in the same way and all will have equal status. Equality is

the condition of being equal in quantity, amount, value, intensity;
the condition of being equal in dignity, privileges, power . . .
with others; fairness, impartiality, equity; in things . . .

7:40

Over and over I read and heard people talking about equal status or that each province and each person should be treated exactly the same, but I think this takes as a given that all provinces are equal now, and they are not. Provinces are not equal. Some have provinces; some have not. It is dependent on the resources they have at their disposal: their land mass, geography, population, and other considerations. So to state that all provinces are equal and should be treated equally is not dealing in reality. While we say in Canada that we treat each person equally, we don't. We have the ideal but not the practice. I'm a believer in equality; that is, knowing that all things are not equal and that by your treatment of them you can bestow equality. It means that sometimes you need to treat people or provinces differently in order for them to become equal. Equality is a process; equal is an end.

My time has come to an end, and as part of our joint process I will now step aside and my colleague from Edmonton-Norwood will continue with our presentation on our findings, particularly in the area of federal/provincial powers and process and accountability.

Thank you.

MS KRYCZKA: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand here today to represent the views of my constituents of Calgary-West, acquired during the recent public consultation process. I wish to personally thank over 600 constituents who participated in the national unity process: 578 through brochures and the Internet and 38 through a meaningful roundtable forum in a community hall. Former minister LeRoy Fjordbotten was our guest facilitator.

Mr. Speaker, my observations of this consultation process are threefold. One, there was a very strong consensus for overall support of the Calgary framework, yet an amazing range of individual perspectives, which I see as reflection of the diversity within Canada. Two, many appreciated the opportunity to express their opinions to government regardless of party affiliations. Three, I appreciated that for most constituents their responses reflected much thought and feeling. Also, many responses were a joint husband/wife submission.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Hon. Dave Hancock, the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, and his staff for their support with this project and also my assistants, Karla Eagles in Calgary and Marie Martin in Edmonton, for their interest and support throughout the process. On a personal note I, too, have an opinion on the Calgary framework, but I wish to state that the report I will table today reflects only the views expressed by my constituents.

First, I will compare Calgary-West questionnaire responses to the preliminary results provincewide. With question 1, "Overall, do you support the framework?" the provincewide yes responses to were 76 percent. Calgary-West yes responses were 92 percent. The no responses were 14 percent provincewide, 7 percent in Calgary-West. The "don't know" responses were 10 percent provincewide and 1 percent in Calgary-West. Comments such as, "Delighted with all-party involvement" and "The elements represent a comprehensive summary of the most important constitutional issues concerning all Canadians" were indicative of the overall support.

Mr. Speaker, with question 2, "What are the elements in the framework that you particularly like?" the message from Calgary-West constituents was very strong regarding the importance of equality for all. For example, the top three provincewide elements - numbers 1, 2, and 6 - were also the top three for Calgary-West. With question 3, "Are there any elements . . . that concern you?" I guess no surprises. Number 5, regarding Quebec's unique character, was the first priority provincewide and in Calgary-West, 33 percent and 38 percent respectively. Element 4 - Canada's diversity, aboriginal peoples, French and English, multicultural citizenry - was rated second provincewide and in Calgary-West, 16 percent and 11 percent respectively. Interestingly, 18 percent of the respondents answered that no, there were no elements that concerned them. Regarding question 5, "Do you think the interests of Albertans are reflected in this framework?" 91 percent responded yes in Calgary-West compared to 71 percent provincewide. There was a discrepancy with the no responses: 18 percent provincewide and only 9 percent in Calgary-West. There were no undecideds with Calgary-West, yet 11 percent were undecided provincewide.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to follow the same format but comment on the key messages, those most often repeated in the responses to the questions on the framework. With question 1 the resounding 92 percent indicates that my constituents responded yes to the key word "overall." Some "yes but" comments most often reflected a concern again with element 5; for example, that it suggests special privileges for Quebec, that Quebec's English language laws are undemocratic, that one is tired of Quebec's whining, that Quebec is unique but should have no special powers; i.e., same as the other provinces. A second common element or concern was concern that the elements work in theory but remain to be seen working in practice.

Mr. Speaker, with question 2 the most frequently repeated comment was that all Canadians and provinces are equal or should

be, meanwhile acknowledging our uniqueness and diversity or multiculturalism: we should perceive all races and creeds as unique. The second most frequent comment was that all levels of government must co-operate or work in partnership for the common good, avoiding costly duplication.

With question 3, Mr. Speaker, element 5, Quebec's unique character was the most common concern. It's felt by many that Quebec has special rights even now and that that should not be so as they are not special. Many did support that Quebec is distinct in culture but not more unique. Other regions are also unique. We should not support Quebec's distinctness financially. Calgary-West constituents also expressed grave concern with lack of rights or restrictions of English in Quebec: Canada is bilingual while Quebec is not; there should be two-language signs in Quebec. Many see these realities as unacceptable.

It is significant to note, Mr. Speaker, that 18 percent of constituents responded that they had no concern with the elements. However, 11 percent were concerned with element 4, Canada's diversity. Key thoughts were that we should celebrate our diversity, while the flip side is that diversity could be destructive. Others suggested that we define "diverse" and "unique," some that immigrants should assimilate while holding on to certain values.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to add that there were many responses to: are there any other concerns? In my summaries I felt there were three priority areas. First, government-related: the west should have fairer representation; we should restructure government size to cut costs and taxes; the federal government should not override provincial area's jurisdictions; Trudeau's Constitution should be scrapped; and the Senate should be elected and represented by region. They're very tired of catering to Quebec; for example, you can't be divorced and stay married. Any future referendum should ask a clear question that describes exact results. All provinces and territories must agree. Aboriginals should also be special, should receive more focus and recognition.

With question 5, Mr. Speaker, the interests of Albertans are reflected in this framework. The 91 percent yes responses did include some conditions. For example, the west should have more say in Ottawa; the interests of natives are not included; our leaders should follow the people's wishes; sympathize with federal supporters in Quebec who have been sadly neglected. A very time-relevant "no" comment was that the federal government doesn't listen anyway.

Mr. Speaker, constituents' responses to question 6, "What does it mean to you to be a Canadian?" were diverse and sincere, such as the following, which I have prioritized by percentage of responses. First of all, 35 percent: an immense pride in our social programs that care for citizens, in our tolerance for each other, in our cultural diversity, heritage, and beauty, and in our responsibility to protect Canada from enemies outside and within. Nineteen percent were thankful for freedoms and privileges to choose quality of life, in our speech, having a say in what happens, and in our thought and religion. Ten percent: our huge future potential to create a huge democracy, opportunities for advancement, prosperity, and reward for personal industriousness. Nine percent: don't split Canada, very special to stay together; love it; Canadian first, Albertan second. Nine percent: important that every person have equal rights and responsibilities whatever origin, can live anywhere in Canada, equal representation. Nine percent: perceived abroad as the best country in the world; we are respected in the world's eyes. Five percent: raising children in safety, all relatively free from corruption and fear. Four percent:

blessed in resources, human and capital; respect for the environment.

7:50

In closing my presentation, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote a few brief constituent comments. "I have taken time to try and type this as my handwriting would be difficult to decipher – almost like being a Canadian!" And that was from a senior.

Separatists will not go away or change their minds. By creating a vision of a stronger, more unified and flourishing Canada, it will be possible to attract the present undecided 20% of Quebecers who hold the balance of voting power. Ignore the separatists, focus on the people who can make a difference.

I am a Canadian by choice, not chance. I am respected by the community of the world for that choice, but more important, I respect myself.

Bigger visions remove smaller tensions.

It's time to put into this Country instead of taking out!

Wouldn't it be grand to finally summarize the answer to this age-old dilemma – "What does it mean to be Canadian?" – in three lines?

Our Provincial government is doing a great job. Hope to see you in the Danish Business Men's Club, Ralph. Take care and God Bless.

Thank you, constituents of Calgary-West. Your contributions were much, much more than just some help. I look forward to sharing the results of this debate with you.

THE SPEAKER: I will now recognize the 20th speaker to participate, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with great honour to represent the views of Calgary-Mountain View constituents today. Reading the responses of 325-plus constituents who submitted their answers, it does amaze me to see the variety and the full range of comments that have been made by the constituents and the deep thought that went into a lot of the comments that I read. While I hear a lot of talk about the individual points – and I will do that as well – I think it's also important to remember: what are the goals of this process? Why are we trying to do all this? From what I got out of reading the comments, it was really to strengthen our nation, to confirm our equality across this country.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are passionate about this country, and I would like to read to you one example that one of my constituents had given. His name is Bradley Leinweber from the Bridgeland area. His point was:

I agree that Canadians are a tolerant people; however, I believe that we are uncompromising where our core values are concerned. We value our freedoms and have stood up to defend them by force of arms if necessary. We are people who by birth or by choice make our lives in the northern part of this continent and strive to better ourselves, provide for our families, and to contribute to our communities. We tend to be a reserved people but look outward with confidence and optimism and seek our fortunes in trade with the rest of the world. We prize our freedoms of speech, association, and movement and hold self-sufficiency to be a virtue. This is the character of my Canada.

I think that sums up a lot, Mr. Speaker. Every one of the last six years we have been voted either the number one or number two country to live in by the rest of the world.

One other example for you, Mr. Speaker.

I live in the greatest country on earth. I know this from traveling extensively. We really have nothing to complain about in this country.

That's from Angela Quinton from the Mayland Heights area.

Mr. Speaker, given that this is the greatest country to live in, I believe this process will only enhance and move us again to another level that all other countries will hope to achieve some day. There have been many great points already made in this debate here tonight and many more will be made over the next couple of days. I would like to focus on the element of uniqueness, which is the biggest concern, from what I'm hearing here and what I heard in my constituency as well.

We are all unique and diverse as provinces, yet we should all be equal as Canadians. Therefore, it is important that these seven elements in the framework must be kept together because when you focus on one element, you lose the perspective and the strength and the balance that the others bring to each one. Many of my constituents had concerns about element 5, over the uniqueness of Quebec. However, when you take into consideration element 6, which states that if one province receives powers, then they must be "available to all provinces," you come to a balance that is extremely important to all Albertans, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close with a large number of examples from my constituents on what it means to be Canadian. One said: to live without fear. Another: enjoy cultural diversity. Another said: we see co-operative effort as being the key to making things happen. Pride, freedom of speech, freedom of choice, the freedom of living in a democratic culture with the highest standard of living in the world, to have the obligation to be involved in the shaping of Canada's future. It's an obligation, it's a responsibility of all Canadians. I think this is a wonderful process, and I am supportive of it and look forward to seeing it make this country stronger in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to the motion on Canadian unity. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Premier . . . [Mrs. Soetaert tripped on the carpet]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, are you okay?

MRS. SOETAERT: Yes, but I've lost my shoe.

MS OLSEN: . . . our Leader of the Official Opposition, Grant Mitchell, and Ms Barrett, leader of the third party, for opening the doors of the Legislature in a nonpartisan way. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, please . . .

MS OLSEN: Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: It's unfortunate, but there's a hole in the floor. It is actually a dangerous hazard, and it distracted my colleague. I'm just wondering whether we could get somebody to look at this and then start her speaking time again.

THE SPEAKER: I'm sorry. I'll have the Sergeant-at-Arms look into the matter, hon. member.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, would you like to re-start?

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would like to table 126 responses from Norwood residents to the unity questionnaire. On December 17, 1962, Lester Pearson made a speech in the House of Commons. In his speech there was "anxiety and uncertainty about the country's future," and that "recent events have shown clearly that we are going through another crisis of national unity and I do not think it is an exaggeration to call it this." Well, I believe Lester Pearson's statements hold true today.

In October 1995, when the Quebec referendum was being held, I was a guest lecturer at the University of Louisville's National Crime Prevention Institute. I felt very isolated being so far from home at such an important time. I could not get any broadcast information in the U.S. on the returns until much later in the evening. I called friends several times to get updated, but I remember feeling anxious about not knowing whether or not I would have the country as I knew it to come home to. It was a hollow feeling. I was embarrassed when students and friends would question how Quebec could think of separating from the rest of the country. They could not understand, nor quite frankly could I. I believed our country was indeed in a crisis.

When the all-party agreement to discuss this issue was signed, I wanted to ensure the consultation I entered into was meaningful. I responded to constituent concerns through telephone conversations, letters, one-on-one discussions, and a process called deliberative democracy. As already pointed out by my colleague from Edmonton-Centre, the process was the most exciting form as I believe our constituents benefited from a truly meaningful dialogue. One participant commented: the microcosm today organized by local MLAs should be magnified thousands of times; I would recommend to everyone I know to come to something like this. Another stated: speakers from different perspectives gave me more understanding; I didn't go through the public school system and learn about the Constitution.

8:00

I want to pick up the presentation from where my colleague from Edmonton-Centre left off. She had spoken on equality, diversity, and working together, and Quebec in recognition. I move on to talk about federal and provincial powers, and I quote from our report.

Participants saw some inherent contradiction in elements 5 through 7, specifically in relation to the interpretation of federalism in Canada, jurisdiction over language laws and special powers for provinces. They said that the process of how power was conferred and practised would have an impact on the first four elements of the framework.

They were concerned as to how the principle "Canadians want their governments to work together particularly in the delivery of their social programs" could be achieved if each province has special powers and a distinct approach to the delivery of social programs. They said that consistency in delivery of social programs that protects all Canadians should take precedence and be an overriding principle.

Participants were concerned about too much decentralization of power and saw this as their most significant concern. Some expressed the belief that the "interpretations of federalism have gone overboard" and that the federal government's presence in the unity dialogue was too weak.

As a result, they said that the Federal government should be leading the unity dialogue and this should form the basis for constitutional discussions and partnerships with the province.

A thought echoed not just through participants in the deliberative democracy process but through constituent questionnaires is

the need for a strong central government. Strong federalism is critical for members of groups who have not traditionally had access to power and decision-making, specifically equity-seeking groups: women, persons with disabilities, aboriginal peoples, and members of visible minorities. Strong federalism gives all Canadians national standards or requirements which all governments must meet. Historically federal laws have better protected people from the vagaries of different political agendas in provincial governments.

One respondent commented on the need for a strong federal government and good collaboration of provincial governments. A participant from the group stated, "There is a need to recognize global trends for greater collaboration not separation." Many concerns can be summed up in this quote from a participant in our consultation, "I am concerned about conferring some special status to one province."

The fourth and final theme is "Process and Accountability," and again I quote from our report.

The participants said there is a need for a better means of ensuring "accountability" and meaningful input of citizens into the dialogue on unity. A consistent theme was that "Quebecers are just like us." They are concerned about quality of life and "putting bread on the table" - and these were common needs upon which to build a foundation of unity. They said there should be a process for establishing a social agreement that is non-legal and it should include:

- A recognition of mutual needs and interests of Canadians.
- A constitutional response around these common needs by the provinces and the federal government.

They said the dialogue should be co-ordinated nationally and that individual apathy is possibly related to the fact that each province is undertaking the unity question on its own and not as a partnership. They also emphasized the importance of ensuring appropriate formats for different groups of Canadians and reaching out creatively, particularly to youth, through:

- Dialogue in small groups, amplified throughout the country.
- Video-tapes of the discussions to reflect how people feel in their own words.
- Focus on people dialoguing on the issue, not just on politicians.

They said that individual obligations should be addressed in addition to individual rights. The social agreement should specify what each individual is obligated to do to achieve a unified Canada.

However, there was some concern about the degree of "social contract" and the level of formality that should be associated with it, suggesting that this issue should be deliberated further.

A slight anomaly raised as part of this discussion was the interest in a social contract. As one participant stated: "I like the idea of a social contract. The federal government should take responsibility." I think the idea of a social contract was attractive because it preserved the social infrastructure through a strong central government. There appears to be some concern that the provinces are attempting to erode this concept.

Before I conclude, I would like to talk about First Nations' concerns. The Calgary framework assumes that the concerns of First Nations people are equal to the concerns of all Canadians. It is time for all governments to recognize the role of First Nations in this country. First Nations people do not enjoy the equality of opportunity espoused in the framework. A more substantive role in the unity question needs to be adopted, and it needs to happen as a matter of course, not as an afterthought.

Now I have the responsibility to tie together what my colleague from Edmonton-Centre and I learned through the process and to

bring forward the views of our participants in the deliberative democracy event and the mail-in responses. There is concurrence with the principles of the Calgary framework for discussion on national unity. The majority of our constituents from Edmonton-Centre and Edmonton-Norwood did support this framework, but there were different understandings of what that meant.

They want the governments to follow through on the declaration. They want the federal government to take the lead role. They want the provincial government to support the federal initiatives. A large minority felt that Quebec should not be given special status or be considered unique, particularly as they felt this would create division. Additionally, more education and information is needed on the issue before a referendum, a clearer understanding of the differences between equal and equality, and a collaborative approach between the citizens and governments. People don't seem to trust politicians to negotiate a deal that will be beneficial to all.

As a politician it's my time to close. We have tried hard to bring forward the diverse voices we've heard during our consultations. I started with quotes from Mr. Pearson's speech of 1962. I stand before you 35 years later; the same issue is unresolved. Politicians don't seem to be moving this forward very fast. Perhaps we should hand it over to better qualified people.

Thank you.

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege now to table almost 600 documents from the constituency of Sherwood Park on the subject of Canadian unity. Indeed, over 600 people in our vicinity took advantage of the opportunity to speak to the framework for national unity, and it is a credit to our Premier, Ralph Klein; Grant Mitchell, Leader of the Official Opposition; and Pam Barrett, leader of the New Democratic Party, that the dialogue on this issue has taken place.

My remarks will provide references from people in one of the largest communities and one of the newest communities in Alberta: Sherwood Park. Like Canada, we are young. We have been founded and have lived only 39 years. On behalf of this young community, it is a privilege to summarize comments that have been reflected to me which respond to the views about the Canadian community as an integral part of our governing structure. The people of Sherwood Park believe in our community, our province, and our Canada. Many respondents appreciated the dialogue, albeit some questioned the overall relevance to Canadians to debate this issue again or at this time. However, by far the sentiment expressed was that of a strong belief in the privileges, the rights, and the responsibilities of all Canadians.

Many in Sherwood Park remember their heritage, the many countries that ultimately sent brave voyagers to a new world, a new country, a new home; for some, such as the grandparents and great-grandparents in Sherwood Park, memories of oppression, conflict, and a lack of the freedoms we enjoy as Canadians, freedoms including the freedom of speech on matters such as national unity. They also remind me that our tolerance as Canadians must not detract from our responsibility for due diligence on behalf of the greater good of all and to ensure that the efforts of their ancestors have not been in vain. They believe that every Canadian, regardless of nationality or religious faith, has a place in our country, respecting the laws and the culture and the traditions of our multicultural society.

During the consultation process I had assistance from Mr. Ron Thumlert, a retired manager from FIGA at the time, now the

Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs. I learned with him and quote the following reference points from a speaker and also someone who submitted a document on being Canadian that most represented our community.

I am glad that our difference of opinions within this country have led and still lead to passionate arguments in politics, royal commissions and such, but seldom to bloodshed.

I am proud to be a citizen of a country with a relatively good international reputation (not colonial, not a bully, open to refugees and immigrants and which often has been an advocate and leader of good causes – e.g. UN peacekeeping, anti-apartheid, land mines ban, etc.), and, though not perfect, is one whose governments, institutions, literature and historical understanding are becoming less racist and more willing to acknowledge past wrongdoing.

I am lucky to be part of a caring and compassionate society which is exemplified by both a personal willingness of millions to individually volunteer time and goods for the good of others and a like willingness to set up nationwide health care, social welfare, education, and pension systems.

I appreciate a great national and regional media – press, radio and TV, which offers choice, breadth of controversy, and relatively broad and even-handed news coverage.

And he continues.

On the negative side, we Canadians are forever worrying about the health and enduring power of our federation: whether Quebec will separate the country, whether our political leaders will continue to try to convince us that federal-provincial dealings are horrendously unjust and whether our aboriginal population will ever be able to either blend in with the rest of Canadians or work out their own destiny in a mutually satisfactory manner.

Mr. Ron Deeprise, writing those remarks on being Canadian, expressed very eloquently what many said.

8:10

Mr. Speaker, the day I spoke to a local group about Canada, a man with an obvious sorrow spoke of a recent news broadcast highlighting huge disrespect to our flag. "Why should we work for unity in the face of such incivility?" he asked. My reply is this: reaction and reasonable actions must be reacted by voices of reasonableness; it is the best way to model for our children.

A comment now from one of our youth:

I'm in the stage of Canada's youth, adolescence. I am proud to be part of Canada's heritage and history, and I'm very fortunate to have this space, health care, and freedom.

Finally, a comment on the future:

It is my view that if we are to retain one nation as a reality, we must take initiatives that identify real people-valued rights, programs, and advantages, identify initiatives which downplay our differences, conflicts, prejudices, and regional disparities, and initiatives which are clear and meaningful to ordinary citizens.

Mr. Speaker, an observation about the statements addressing government element 7. It is our challenge, this Assembly's, to redefine the role of communities and with local community and municipal councils to create a Canada on our doorstep that respects every governing authority. Our local government associations – the Urban Municipalities Association of Alberta and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties – have turned to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities demanding a partnership and consultation and resources to recognize that passion for excellence and delivery of services to every Canadian.

It's interesting to note that Sherwood Park is almost synonymous with a community in the eastern townships of Quebec, Granby, who has undertaken twinning with almost four other countries, if you include the fact that it has twinned with two in

one country, and has also one Canadian twin. What a pity if Canadian communities could not twin with one with another.

Our Premier has expressed the belief that strong and healthy communities nourish strong and healthy Albertans. My community, the people of Sherwood Park, believe in our community, our Alberta, and most of all, our Canada. Mr. Speaker, to paraphrase your words in your prayer here today: may our service to God through our service to Canadians be worthy.

THE SPEAKER: At 8:15 in the evening it's probably time for a minor interjection from the Speaker. Transparency and openness is really important in this debate, and I really applaud the quality of the speakers tonight. I mean, this is quite phenomenal, to sit here in the chair and listen to really outstanding speeches from hon. members. I know Speakers are not supposed to say things like that. However, transparency and openness and truth are really important as well.

To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, when she talks about "in her 35 years", and to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Member for Sherwood Park, when she talks about "in her 39 years" - I want to just caution, then, the next speaker, the hon. Minister of Economic Development, that if we have numbers in the 30s, then the Speaker will probably have to rise again.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a great introduction. I appreciate it. I could say, "In my 85 years," and you might buy that one.

However, Mr. Speaker, I'm standing today to represent the constituents of Calgary-Foothills, and I'm very pleased to be able to stand here and give the responses that have come from the constituents that I represent in this House.

Before I start, we had a tremendous response from Calgary-Foothills, one of the largest, in the form of over 530 written-in forms. In addition to that, we held a joint town meeting with my colleague from Calgary-North Hill. We had roughly 100 constituents come to have a dialogue on unity. I have to say that I was very proud of the comments that came from a very diverse group of people within my riding.

In order to really have a full breadth of the knowledge that was on the forms that came in, I had to solicit the help of three people to go through every form and read every comment and put forward a full analysis and reconciliation of all of the comments that came through. It took six days and six evenings of three people working round the clock to go through the 530 responses. A very thorough job was done, Mr. Speaker, by a lady who has worked very hard in my constituency, Sheila Murphy; by another lady who has worked also very hard, Thelma Crowther; and a very special thanks to my mother, who actually sat for six days at the kitchen table going through this and making up a full synopsis that correlated directly to every response that came in to all of the elements of the framework.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said tonight and this afternoon about the seven elements within the framework that was sent out to Albertans to comment on. Some of my comments probably won't be much different, but I would like to reflect quickly on some of them. By and large the people of Calgary-Foothills liked the overall framework, but there were many qualifying statements that were attached to the answers on the overall framework. Some of those came from a further review of each of the elements.

When you look at the element "All Canadians are equal and

have rights protected by law," there isn't anyone that could disagree with that statement. But as you read on, you realize that, again, as other members have mentioned, number 5 calls for something that is different and unique. If all are equal, then how can one be unique?

By definition, Mr. Speaker, when you look in the dictionary and you look at "equal" as defined in the dictionary, it means, "The same in number, size, value, degree, rank . . . pitch." If you look at "unique" in the dictionary, it means, "Of which there is only one, unequalled, having no like or equal or parallel." So there is confusion as to the words that are being used in the framework. I think it's unfortunate, because I think Canadians believe that all Canadians should be equal. I think also the response from my constituents from the summaries we received was that all provinces should have equality and that there should not be a distinction for any group within Canada. People should be Canadians, and they must be Canadians first and foremost.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you along with a number of other members have attended citizenship courts when they've been held. When people come to this country, they come here because they choose to be Canadian. Some of them have had to fight their way here. They've given up everything they've had to be Canadian. It perplexes me, quite frankly, to look at Canadians and think: why are Canadians unhappy about being Canadian?

A new Canadian stands up and pledges allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, to Canada, and to the flag of this country and doesn't hesitate to make that pledge because they want to be a Canadian. They don't want to be a hyphenated Canadian. They want to be a Canadian, and they've done everything in their power to get into Canada. Those of us who were born here have maybe not had to take that pledge of allegiance, and maybe we need to take that pledge of allegiance to reaffirm our position as a Canadian, and then we wouldn't continually have the debate as to whether someone is special, distinct, unique, or equal. We would all be Canadian, and we wouldn't have hyphenations. I think that is the essence of the problem on number 5, Mr. Speaker, that if we are all equal, then we really can't be unique. We must all either be unique or we must all be equal. You cannot cross those terminologies over.

8:20

The other issue that was quite predominant in my riding was number 7. Today in the Constitution of Canada there are clear responsibilities for various levels of government. Unfortunately, they're not always followed, and I know that at the Premiers' meetings the last couple of years there has been a reaffirming of the roles and responsibilities between the federal government and the provincial governments. Sometimes we forget about that, but it is clearly laid out in the Constitution that we have today.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think my constituents want Canada to be Canadian. They want us to stand tall and say: we are Canadian; we're part of Canada. We're many nations, but we're one Canada, and we cannot be anything else but. I often wonder why someone would say that Quebec wants to leave Canada. Why would you want to leave the best country in the world? Where else would you go? How else would you survive? Why would you leave the very best that there is?

I think that's reflected in the responses from my constituents. As we went through every comment, people are proud to be Canadian. They've been a little bit apathetic on their responses in the past, but today they are not. I'd like to read a few responses, if I might, Mr. Speaker, from my constituents that talked about their Canada. They call it "My Canada." This is

from a family in Hamptons Park, and they say:

My Canada can be likened to an arena where participants of diverse talents propel themselves over frozen geography, through co-ordinated effort, for realizing accomplishments, focussed on directing an objective into a common goal. My Canada needs good coaches and captains, interested in maximizing potential & pride in desired results, more as an example in leadership than in an exercise of legislated power.

Another comment from a constituent is:

To be Canadian is best described in images and feelings.

It is about looking over the plains of Saskatchewan at sunrise, watching crystal clear waterfalls in Banff, flying over the forests of British Columbia, looking over a snow covered plain in Manitoba, admiring Toronto's skyline on a clear night, walking down narrow streets in Old Quebec, and breathing in the salty breeze overlooking the Atlantic Ocean in the Maritimes.

Being Canadian is about feeling safe and free. It is about doing our duty to our country when required. To be Canadian is the pride we feel when our national anthem plays at the Olympic Games after we have won a gold medal.

Being Canadian is not about our politics or our struggles. It is about how we unite to overcome our struggles and make our mark in the world.

What does it mean to be a Canadian?

To be a Canadian is to travel freely to any country in the world. It is about the feeling we get when we answer the question, "Where are you from?"

Toronto? Montreal? Vancouver? Quebec? Calgary?

No . . .

[I'm from] Canada."

Mr. Speaker, another one that came in that I thought was very important was from a constituent on Dalcroft Crescent in Dalhousie. He wrote:

In the fall of '95, during the time of the Quebec referendum, I was traveling through New Zealand. When asked by my fellow travelers what I thought of separation I pretty much said I could care less. That was up until the night of the referendum itself. I then became very afraid that the country I returned home to was not going to be the same as the one I left. It would not be Canada. The sense of national pride and patriotism I felt when I learned Canada would stay together overwhelmed me. I then realized that I am proud to be a part of a Canada that includes and respects all provinces. Otherwise, it just wouldn't be home.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, what I'm saying from Calgary-Foothills is that Canada is very important to all of us. We must be proud to be Canadians first and foremost, and we must be equal in the law and in spirit. So from Calgary-Foothills: unique or different isn't there, but equality certainly is.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me real pleasure this evening to stand and speak on behalf of the residents of Alberta and the citizens of Alberta from Lethbridge-East on the issue of unity and what the framework approach that was developed in Calgary means to those citizens. They participated quite actively in the consultation process. There were about 458 returns submitted through the process of the questionnaires and E-mail. We also had in Lethbridge a workshop, a roundtable-type format, that was jointly sponsored by the Member for Lethbridge-West. I want to indicate at this time that I think this was a good indication of how we managed this whole process on a nonpartisan basis, where both of us from Lethbridge, from different parties, could work together to get the citizens of Lethbridge active, to get their reaction to this document.

The main focus that the people of Lethbridge-East wanted to convey was that they were very pleased that the government undertook the process they did. This was kind of a general overview and a general feeling from a lot of people. There were little messages in the margins of the submissions, and it was a general comment by the individuals who actively participated in the workshop. Overall they supported the framework of the Calgary document. They felt it was a very broad-based representation of how they perceived Canada, but they also felt that it provided the flexibility that we would need to be able to keep Canada as a country and strong in the format that they felt was important to them.

There were a number of different comments made with respect to the overall support for the framework. One of the more general comments that came up at that workshop roundtable format was: "Well, maybe we shouldn't be dealing with it, because it's really in the hands of Quebec. If they vote to leave, how do we control that?" The discussion then went on to deal with whether or not there was an ability of Canada, the rest of the provinces, to really provide a scenario that could answer the questions of the sovereigntists in Quebec or whether this was a more fundamental desire on their part than: are we being treated equally, treated fairly, and do we have unique rights or unique opportunities within the framework of Canada? So that question kind of permeated the whole system.

In the end a very small percentage of the respondents said: absolutely no, this does not represent what we want as a basis for negotiation. This was something less than 1 percent, where it was emphatically no, where you went down through each of the questions and they were all no, no, no, no. There were a number of others who said they didn't feel that it adequately reflected the framework that they would like to see, but when they went down through certain parts of it, they had very positive things to say about some of the particular points in dealing with the approach to constitutional amendments, in dealing with equality; you know, if a special condition or a special privilege is conveyed to one province, then it must be available for all provinces. They would talk favourably about those. That made up another 7 or 8 percent of the respondents in the total package. So what we could see, then, is that really we had a very large proportion of the people of Lethbridge-East who supported the idea that this was a good framework for us to use in our debate.

The main part of the framework that they really liked was the emphasis that was put on the fact that equality was an inherent part of being Canadian. It was an equality for individuals. It was an equality for different levels of government in the context of the relationship with another unit at the same level, whether it be intermunicipal or interprovincial.

8:30

I'll jump to one of the others tied into that. They were quite concerned about the relationship between the provincial and federal governments. There was a real division among the citizens from Lethbridge-East as it related to whether we should have a really strong, dominant federal government or whether we should have kind of a co-ordinating federal government with a lot of powers at the provincial level. I think in the end result the strong focus on a co-ordinating form of federal government was what they would like to see more than a group of relatively independent provincial authorities.

The elements that they found of greatest concern to them related to the issue of the relationship between governments, that I just added to the ones that they really liked, and also the uniqueness

of Quebec. In principle 5, when we were talking about the idea of Quebec being unique, they didn't feel that unique was any special threat to them as Albertans or as Canadians, as long as it didn't mean special. They wanted uniqueness to be a reflection of, you know, the culture, the approach, the attitudes of the people of Quebec, just like being an Albertan sets us apart as a unique group within Canada. So they felt that as long as this uniqueness was conveyed to all groups, this was important.

On question 4, which asked about elements that they feel would still needed to be addressed, the main component here that came up had to deal with the First Nations communities of Canada. They wanted to see some clarification of the role of the First Nations communities: how they were to be treated both in terms of constitutional change, status of Canada change, and in terms of getting some of their issues of their status, their rights addressed, as well as just dealing with the issue of what do we see as the appropriate status for Quebec.

Question 5, "Do you think the interests of Albertans are reflected in this framework?" With few exceptions they said yes to that question. The main concern there was that if they talked about Albertans as a group or Albertans as individuals, how that would affect the relationship. Some of them saw that if we were dealing with Albertans as individuals, we would end up with some kind of a trade-off that had to occur because we would not be getting the same kind of individualized treatment as Quebec.

When we got down to the final question, it was really quite interesting to see what they responded when they were asked what it meant to be a Canadian. The responses ranged from the general feeling of the United Nations telling us we were a good country to the fact that we do have a good reputation internationally. But what I'd like to do is just quote one of the comments that came from a new Canadian. He said, "That I am a free citizen and have the right to celebrate being a Canadian." Mr. Speaker, I think that reflects the kind of approach that came from many of the respondents in Lethbridge-East whether they talked to me on the phone or whether I kind of put an overall tone to their work that they submitted in writing. It was the fact that they liked to celebrate being a Canadian. They feel proud to be Canadians, and they don't want to see any kind of threat or any kind of break-up occurring in their country.

Another one of the respondents in a long typed letter concluded:

As Canadians we feel a profoundly quiet pride attached to our diversity, tolerance, compassion and equality of opportunity - in a Global sense. I believe emphatically that we must extend these values amongst ourselves regardless of Northern, Western, Eastern or Central geography. It is essential if we are to remain vibrant, strong and unified.

The general focus, then, was that the people of Lethbridge-East felt the Premiers should be commended for getting together in Calgary, bringing forward such a broad-based yet comfortable approach to the discussion base for approaching Canadian unity, and they also felt quite proud that the Premier would go ahead and institute the process that he did by bringing them into the debate. They really appreciated that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude on behalf of the citizens of Lethbridge-East and say that we will be supporting this motion.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it certainly gives me great pleasure to be able to rise and join colleagues on

both sides of the House to speak to this very important resolution. First and foremost, the Calgary declaration is a statement of equality. It invites all Canadians to be part of one family where each individual has the same rights and privileges and the same access to the benefits of being in the family. Being equal with everyone else doesn't mean that we all have to be clones of each other. In fact, equality means that we have the right to be different, the freedom to choose our jobs and careers, to choose whom we marry, and to raise our children with our values and in our religious traditions.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I am happy to report that 72 percent of the respondents from my constituency agreed with the concepts of equality described in the Calgary declaration. Those are:

1. All Canadians are equal and have [their] rights protected by law.
2. All provinces, while diverse in their characteristics, have equality of status.
3. Canada is graced by a diversity, tolerance, compassion and an equality of opportunity that is without rival in the world.
4. Canada's gift of diversity includes Aboriginal peoples and cultures, the vitality of the English and French languages and a multicultural citizenry drawn from all parts of the world.
5. In Canada's federal system, where respect for diversity and equality underlies unity, the unique character of Quebec society, including its French speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law, is fundamental to the well being of Canada. Consequently, the legislature and Government of Quebec have a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society within Canada.

As a wise farmer mentioned to me a few days ago - and everyone certainly is giving quotes in their presentations this evening - he likened Canada to a container of V8 juice.

AN HON. MEMBER: A container of what?

MR. STELMACH: V8 juice, which is a blend of various distinct flavours, not like a pizza where you can pick each person out in the crowd.

6. If any future constitutional amendment confers powers on one province, these powers must be available to all provinces.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker:

7. Canada is a federal system where federal, provincial and territorial governments work in partnership while respecting each other's jurisdictions. Canadians want their governments to work cooperatively and with flexibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation. Canadians want their governments to work together particularly in the delivery of their social programs. [They also want to] renew their commitment to work in partnership with the Government of Canada to best serve the needs of Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, having traveled to other parts of the world, I am so thankful to be Canadian. We solve our differences peacefully through debate and democratic institutions and elections. We are a small country in terms of population, but we have achieved so much together. We have been able to grow to the seventh largest economy in the world, and together we have relatively more sway in international negotiations and trade issues, environmental and other matters than our small population would suggest we have.

8:40

We in Canada have been trying for some time now to find a way of putting into words our ideal Canada and then enshrining these into the Constitution. I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, that while these words in the Calgary declaration are necessary and valuable, words alone will not save Canada or reignite the passion in people to be Canadian. We need action by citizens, political leaders, and governments to work together in the spirit of unity and respect for differences. We in Alberta need the words that individuals and provinces are equal, but more importantly we need the other provinces and the federal government especially to recognize our differences and to respect that we may wish from time to time to do things differently than central Canada. We need the words and the laws, but moreover we need the political will to respect these principles as we respect the differences in other parts of our country. Equal, yes, but identical to central Canada, I think not. We respect their right to approach issues in the way they wish. We expect the same freedom in Alberta, the freedom to do things our way and to be treated equally before the law.

Mr. Speaker, I again return to the notion of the family. Each of my children are different and unique, but they have equal access to my guidance, my advice, my criticism, and my insight. They also seem to have equal access to appeal to my wife and me for financial assistance and support. My advice, however, comes interest free.

Mr. Speaker, many know that 1998 will be the 100th anniversary of my family immigrating to Canada and homesteading the family farm at Andrew. [interjection] I'm not saying I'm only 20 either. It is an event that I'm certainly very proud of and an event worthy of celebration. It would be a shame, however, if during the year of celebrating this 100-year anniversary our family could not be absolutely certain that we could look forward to another hundred years in a united Canada. So, Mr. Speaker, I ask that all colleagues join me in supporting the Calgary declaration.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and speak on behalf of the Wainwright constituency on the Calgary unity declaration. I'd first of all like to compliment the Premier on leading the Premiers in the development of the unity framework and certainly compliment the opposition in their supportive role.

I would like to state at the outset that these thoughts and ideas come from 300-plus questionnaires as well as letters and dialogue that I've had with my constituents. There was a lot of thought that was put into these responses. It was said many times: thank you for the opportunity of being able to voice an opinion.

It must be reaffirmed that the declaration is a statement of national unity principles only. This resolution does not in any form go towards the constitutional amendments, and it must also be stressed that before any constitutional amendments can be passed by the Alberta government a referendum is legally required. I personally am pleased to see that each province participated and took the unity situation seriously, because it may well impact the lives of every Canadian.

I had the opportunity to go to Japan a few years ago and meet with numerous business officials over there. There was an interesting statement that came from a Japanese businessman, and

it was at about the time Quebec was holding their referendum in 1992 or '93. This statement was:

I don't understand you Canadians; you have the highest standard of living in the world and one of the nicest countries in the world, and you're voting to see whether or not you want it. That statement certainly brought home to me that we take this wonderful country and everything in it for granted. So, folks, there's a lot on the line, and all Canadians should have input into the future of Canada, not just one province making the decisions.

In reading the questionnaires from my constituency, it soon became obvious that our people are very proud to be Canadians. When asked what it means to be a Canadian – and there were several different meanings – the most common phrases were that they were thankful for the rights and freedoms that we have. They were thankful for the freedom of speech, choice, work, worship, and opportunities in a wonderful country with good, industrious people. One thought that I had that had a special meaning came from the hamlet of Hayter:

There is a quiet proudness in being Canadian. When I travel in the world, I am not spit at or sworn to, but instead I am treated with respect and almost catered to. We have been there for the world. We are the peace keepers. We are the refuge. We are the strong, silent nation that supports others. I like being Canadian. I wouldn't give it up for the world. I want to keep being there for others – from a starting point of helping in the community to helping other nations worldwide. I am Canadian – proud, helpful, silent, not boastful, strong, happy, quietly content, and you can trust me.

There was another concern, and that was number 7, which was reflected by 19 percent of the responses. That was the partnership between federal and provincial governments. The lack of a true, co-operative partnership has probably been the biggest contributor to the potential breakup of this country. True co-operation is vital to the unity of Canada. We have a situation now where the federal government makes the rules and the provinces pay the bills. Well, Mr. Speaker, that won't work. We need much more co-operation than there's been in the past, not just for Alberta but for all of the provinces. Each government's authority must be clarified and respected. All of the policy changes must be worked on together, and all provinces must be under the same rules.

Nearly 70 percent of our constituents were in favour of the Calgary declaration and want to remain united, but not at all costs. There were many comments about item 5 and the unique character of Quebec society. Their concern was basically a fear that individual equality and the provincial equal status would not be protected. They are concerned that allowing a unique character for Quebec would lead to some special privileges in future constitutional negotiations. Here are some of the quotes on number 5. "Quebec must be made to realize that we want them as part of Canada but with no special privileges." "I am as unique as the person in Quebec." "Quebec is unique in their culture and language, but must not get special privileges." "We are all equal with our unique differences." And the last one: "If Quebec doesn't want to be an equal partner, then ask the last person leaving – Please turn out the light." Even though they are cautious on this issue, the majority still supported the framework.

The message that we are sending to Quebec is: yes, we want you to be part of Canada, a Canada where all Canadians and provinces are equal and have rights protected by law, where the unique character of all cultures will be recognized without special privileges, a Canada that all provinces can be proud of. This statement of principles passed by the people of each of the provinces in Canada will extend a strong invitation to Quebec that Canadians respect and value them and will recognize them as

equals in Confederation. This declaration could be a catalyst in solidifying the future of our great province.

Thank you.

8:50

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to be able to stand tonight and speak to the issue of unity. I love this country, and I believe everybody who is in public life and serves in Alberta and our country must love it in order to do the jobs we do. Canada is the best place in the world to live in. This year, for the first time, we put up a flagpole. That flag was up by Canada Day, and it was very significant. I think our children's generation appreciates the unity of Canada maybe more than we did growing up, because they talk about it and they know it's an issue and they're very much afraid that Canada may break up. So I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to have this exercise, you might say, in my constituency to discuss unity with my constituents.

Admittedly, not all the surveys came back the way I would have liked them. Some people are negative about Quebec and the unity of our country, but thankfully a very small, small few. That made me sad, but certainly many more comments were positive. I have to say, though, that I had more calls about not having a fall session. [interjections] It's true, and we want truth and openness in here. I had more calls about health and education and, yes, even highway 794. However, I tried to get them focused, and I had an open house. I think it shows my commitment to nonpartisanship when I actually shared ads in the local papers with some of my colleagues: the members for Stony Plain and St. Albert, and I think Redwater wasn't quite ready yet, but we helped them along. It just showed what a nonpartisan approach we did to unity. So I had an open house, and only about 20 people dropped by. I'm pleased to say, though, that there were 351 responses from my constituency, but only 20 dropped by. Two of those were negative, but I found out they did the rounds and stopped at Stony Plain's open house as well, so we kind of combined those. So really there weren't that many.

Some of the comments that afternoon were really profound, so I'd like to share just some of those. A few of these were from Darwin Park, whom I know the Member for Stony Plain knows and respects. I'd like to share something that he said.

We can't assume anything. Unity is like a marriage. You have to constantly work to culture and define it. [Everyone must] compromise, giving 100%. You can't put it away on a shelf and leave it because it's working or not working and think it will be different or solved when you take it off the shelf. It's a constant debate. Why don't we see ourselves as others see us? We [have been] voted the best country in the world. Why don't we [always] think so? We define ourselves often looking inward rather than outward, [and that's] not healthy.

The exciting thing about Canada is that it's an experiment in peaceful co-existence. People have willingly come together from every culture, generations back. By and large it's working to show people that diversity and multiculturalism works. We are a model for the world, but we can become a better model of an integrated, multicultural, multilingual nation. That makes us leaders. There is no blueprint. We're creating it and changing it as the pressures of society make us adapt and change. [It's a] tremendous responsibility nationally and internationally. Some other comments from other people. Pat says

Others see us as lucky, [yet] we take it for granted. We have

nothing to compare to. How can we capture [that feeling of the] rally in '95 [for those who went down to that rally]. What made us come stand together?

That kind of passion we should feel for our country.

Another person, who is an immigrant from England, said that Canadians are not passionate about their country; they don't sing *O Canada* with passion. She is in Canada by choice because it's the best country in the world. She just said that we cannot separate. When people say they don't like or need Quebec, it's because they don't know Quebec. The referendum was the only time she saw passion.

Another one said that Canada's the only place in the world where diversity is accepted, but we need to celebrate that, and it's a wonderful place.

The general discussion was important. Sometimes people said that Quebec's needs aren't any more unique than anyone else's. It's emotionally and politically fanned. Sometimes it's only a few politicians and the media fanning the fire that is negative. The media never reports the positive things.

Then I had one university student – her name is Heidi – and she felt that Alberta is lucky. We have to be against separation, but there is little understanding at the grassroots level. It's ignorance. Communication needs to increase between the common people of Quebec and Alberta so that we understand and advance Canadian culture. We need the interaction of common people, twinning cities, exchanging E-mail. We need to learn French and familiarize ourselves with all cultures in Canada, to listen to the radio. She mentioned certain clubs, like the Rotary clubs, and different programs where they have exchange students going to Quebec. Her view of the world and of Canada is much more open than many of us who don't travel as much. She said we should magnify our successes and not our problems.

I want to point out a very strong letter that I got. It was talking about the French immersion program and the cuts to education and what it's done to the Meridian Heights school. Within this letter is a real strong point about unity that I'd like to share with you.

These children have made an amazing commitment to Canada that deserves more respect from politicians (both Federal and Provincial) and from the education system. To see little five, six, and seven year old children actively speaking French in all of these classes fascinates me to no end when I think of how badly I did in speaking our second official language throughout my education. These children learn more about our Canadian culture than many of us learn in a lifetime, which is a sad statement.

The commitment of these teachers, principals, and class aides to the program is heart wrenching and deserves [our] attention . . . especially considering what this country has been going through over the past several years.

My family is so committed to the program that, for the first time ever, we have cancelled our usual sun seeking holiday this spring to take both my 9 and 13 year old daughters on a tour of Quebec prior to spring break. Again, sadly, it's my first time ever in the Province of Quebec.

As a member of the Edmonton media . . .

This is sent by Marty Forbes, and with his permission I am quoting part of his letter.

. . . I am going to do whatever I can to draw a great deal of attention and awareness to the Education cuts and especially to the French immersion program over the next several months . . .

It would be with great sorrow that we may have to think of the possibility of losing ten years of education with these young minds [and futures] and the future appreciation that they have for a united Canada!

So that was a very strong letter that I wanted to share here tonight. I will get four copies of it and table it later.

I guess I have a moment to say that I was thinking back to 1967, the centennial year. I was very young, a student in school. [interjections] Yes. Remember that unity train that came across? That was very, very powerful to me as a young student. It was one of the first things that connected all of us. Remember the centennial song that we sang? No, I'm not the MLA who is singing, so you can breathe a sigh of relief. But that was a very powerful moment in my youth. I hope that more of our young people can experience those kinds of things that bond us together, not just hear the negative things about Quebec separating but about the wonderful strengths that we have as a very, very strong country, a wonderful, beautiful country that I am so proud and so fortunate to live in.

My family, like the minister from Vegreville-Viking, has been here over a hundred years. We've had that reunion and very much celebrated the fact that our ancestors came here and settled here because it was the best place in the world to raise a family, to grow and expand and have opportunities that you can't in other places. So I'm very proud of this country I live in, and I hope that this small message that all of us may send on behalf of all our constituents is heard loud and clear throughout all of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:00

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise in this special sitting of the Legislature on unity tonight to represent the views expressed to me by young people of Fort McMurray who are not even of voting age but who all wanted to play a part in creating our future.

My constituency of Fort McMurray is blessed with an abundance of resources and populated with hardworking folks dedicated to the betterment of our province and country. Our city's theme in French is "se baigne dans l'huile," which really translates to mean: we have the energy. It's this positive youthful energy that I wish to very briefly comment on.

I want to bring to the attention of this House the views of this group of young people, who are a valuable and important group of people in our country's future. In fact, these young Albertans, all high school students ranging in age from 14 to 17, presently attend three major high schools in this constituency of Fort McMurray. They are from Father Patrick Mercredi high, the composite high school, and Westwood community high. These young students were enthusiastic and energetic and quite forthright on what Alberta and Canada mean to them. The majority of students were very supportive of the framework on national unity. The majority of the students indicated their support for the Premier's initiative pertaining to the Calgary declaration, and once again, they felt good about our province of Alberta playing a leading role. It is these Canadians who have the most to gain by a united Canada and, conversely, the most to lose by a fractured Canada.

In many respects their views were refreshing. They believe in Canada, and they believe that there is a place for Quebec in Canada. They are concerned about our future and the country's future. In fact, they echoed much of what has already been spoken here this evening by many of the speakers and far more eloquently than I'm able to do. They were extremely patriotic, proud to be Canadians, and appreciative of the rights and

obligations and freedoms that are part of being Canada. It is difficult not to have this enthusiasm rub off, and as legislators it is our sacred trust to ensure that we do right by this generation, the youth and children of our towns and cities throughout all of Alberta, and to ensure that the Canada we leave for them to inherit and govern and to pass on to their children is strong and united.

The framework proposed by the Premier is the first step to ensuring that this happens, and as the MLA for Fort McMurray I am pleased to stand before you tonight in support of this framework as reflected by the majority of Fort McMurray's youth.

Finally, I quote one of them when they said: vive la province d'Alberta, vive le Canada. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quebec nationalism versus federalism has been a contentious debate brought to the political forefront at various points throughout the history of our country. History has clearly documented the path that this conflict has followed. In fact, it can be traced as far back as the division of the colony in 1791 into Upper and Lower Canada. Historians have told us that the tensions of conflicting social and religious values were evident even then between the French- and English-speaking peoples. In 1840, when Lord Durham recommended the political union of Upper and Lower Canada, he said that what he was witnessing was two nations at war within one state. In retrospect the Act of Union was lacking in providing a solution to a problem that has sustained its existence through to the present day.

Nonetheless, our country has reached the point where we can no longer live with this discontent. The conflict has taken its toll on all of us across the country. The effects are felt in the relationships between the French and the English politically, economically, culturally, and linguistically. With the failure of Quebec to support the repatriation of the British North America Act in 1982, the debate for the 1980s and '90s was launched.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are heading into the 21st century, 130 years after the birth of this country, decades after this debate began, and we are still trying to break through the perceived barriers that have divided us for so long. I must say that the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords were indeed valiant efforts in trying to solve the issue through constitutional means, but at the same time, the proposals put forth before the people of this country incorporated too many issues for consideration.

As members of this Assembly and representatives of the residents of Alberta, we have spent the last couple of months consulting with our constituents to see how they feel about the Calgary declaration. I must say that much of what I have heard from colleagues who spoke earlier is very similar to the views expressed by my constituents, and I would at this time like to table 160 discussion papers that I received from my constituents. Many people expressed feelings of fatigue and frustration that this debate is continuing. Others, however, expressed a strong desire to use this process to put forth the strongest effort ever to reconcile the Quebec issue.

Some of the people I spoke to are proud to be Canadian, to live in a diverse and wonderful country. That pride is of a country that includes Quebec, Mr. Speaker. One constituent told me that it is time we communicate with the people of Quebec and not the

politicians. We both agreed that this consultation process has done just that. As Albertans we are speaking to the people of Quebec, and what we are telling them is that we value their diversity, their culture, their language, and their contributions to this country. We want a resolution to this age-old conflict. At the end of the day, when all is said and done, we want a country that is whole. Once again, that means one that includes the province of Quebec.

We all want the same thing regardless of the language that we speak. My constituents have told me that we need to start focusing on what we have been blessed with: natural resources, our vibrant economy, and the knowledge brought to us by the numerous cultures that have made Canada their home.

Mr. Speaker, if Quebec were to leave this federation, what this country would be faced with is a situation similar to a divorce between a husband and his wife. That's right. This country would go through the motions of negotiating a settlement. Only it wouldn't be who gets the kids or who gets the dog or cat but things like: how do we share the national debt, pension plans, and medicare? The difference also is that there is an entire country involved, and neither side will be able to walk away without far-reaching ramifications that may not be realized until well into the future.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Another of my constituents told me that we should clearly define the consequences of separation by any province and advise that any provincial referendum on separation will not be accepted without the concurrence of the people of Canada.

Some are also saying that maybe we need some alternatives, that maybe we need a plan A and a plan B, and the federal government has in fact introduced such plans. Plan A includes a number of measures intended to increase Quebecers' desire to remain in Canada. It is my belief that the process we have undertaken with the Calgary declaration is one such measure. Given direction by the Premier of this province, we have through this process chosen to send a clear message to Quebec. It is my hope that by the end of this sitting the results will show the people of Quebec that we do value both their province and the people that live within its borders.

Plan B is similar to what I touched on a few moments ago, the divorce. The second plan deals with the consequences of secession and the guiding principles in the event of such an unfortunate occurrence. The reality is that we must put forth the strongest effort we are capable of to let Quebec know that our vision of Canada is one that includes them, but we must also be prepared for all possible future outcomes.

9:10

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the whole matter is about a breakdown in communication. We have two groups of people who are seemingly trying to work towards a common solution, but unfortunately the root of the problem is defined differently on each side. In his book *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* Michael Ignatieff had an interesting thought which backs up the point I just made. He said that the Canadian federation's essential problem has always been that

Francophone Québécois identify Quebec as their nation and Canada as their state, while English-speaking Canadians identify Canada as both their nation and as their state.

It's true that we may not view the problem in the same way, but the heart of the matter is that this is our country. We must look

past our differences and collectively focus on what would make us stronger as a nation. We must build on the fact that Canada serves as a model to many countries abroad. Our federation in its entirety demonstrates to them a system that encompasses diversity. As residents of this country, it is our responsibility to put forth an honest and informed effort to sustain our country as a prosperous, peaceful, progressive nation, a thriving industrial democracy that is the envy of the world.

I leave you with the following quote spoken by the Hon. Joe Clark, who said:

Any nation, great or small, is a unity of differences. We in Canada seem persistent, and among large western nations almost unique, in developing the differences and not the unity.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Member's Apology

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I made an inappropriate comment regarding the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. It was made in the heat of debate and was not meant to be hurtful in any way or reflect on the member's integrity. As Justice minister I need to ensure that the comments I make uphold not only the spirit but the letter of the law, and I sincerely apologize for the remark that I made earlier.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, apology accepted. Thank you.

Debate Continued

THE SPEAKER: The 30th speaker on this unity resolution is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and 30 has nothing to do with my age, sir.

First of all, I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that 10 minutes is not a great deal of time to discuss this very important issue in this Legislature. However, I'll try to be very brief and to the point, and I'll break my comments down to four parts, the first of which is a brief discussion of that which was presented to me in these submissions from the residents in my constituency, secondly from some 200-odd people that came out to speak at a public forum on the subject, and lastly about 200 and some odd people that I've had the opportunity to speak to on the street and in and around my home, in particular some 75 young people that go to school with my two sons. Secondly, I'll just speak about two very, very well-written submissions that were made to me personally on the subject so as to be able to present them here in this forum. Thirdly, I'd like to speak of a personal experience that my family and I had over the last three months, and last I'd like to speak to the final question that all of those people spoke to me about and quote them and their responses on how it feels to be Canadian.

Sir, I'd like to speak in favour of the motion before us, and that's on the instruction of almost all of those people. Certainly some of them had some differing points of view on various parts of the report, particularly the unique character of Quebec and the protection of that uniqueness. Some had some questions on the priority of aboriginal peoples, but most others had a great deal of respect for those in Canada and, in fact, wholly supported the submission.

Two learned gentlemen put together a brief essay that is part of the package that I intend to table at the end of my brief remarks,

and it basically runs on the thesis that it's a very good start at unity, but unfortunately many people in this nation, particularly some politicians, feel this statement is a vehicle to move away from a strong federal government to a loose association of provinces and to denigrate those national goals that we all have in common, that being a common education base for all the citizens, and we can see that when they point out that K to 12 in Alberta is K to 11 in Quebec and K to 13 in Ontario and is not transferable across this nation, which impedes a lot of movement. They point out further that health care is now becoming a patchwork across the province in what is delivered and what is not delivered, and they point out most emphatically, being in business themselves, the difficulty with interprovincial trade. They also quote the province of Alberta as being the leader in free trade in this nation of ours.

Secondly I'd like to read to you for the record a statement of some 24 citizens of Canada that put this paper together.

We believe that Canada can succeed, but we [recognize] that it could fail unless we listen to each other, understand each other, and are respectful of each other's history.

We believe that we are all linked by political, social and economic ties; that we have no differences that need be irreconcilable, and that we can find common ground.

We believe that Canada, its institutions and its constitution should be recreated on the basis of the following principles.

The first principle:

All Canadians must recognize that Canada has been built on the land of First Nations, that no honourable solution is possible without a commitment to justice for Aboriginal peoples, to the recognition of their inherent right (as political communities pre-dating the coming of the French and English) to govern themselves, and to the provision of the means to their economic self-sufficiency.

We believe that Canada is not only a union of provinces and territories but also a partnership of two founding peoples, two societies, two nations, English-speaking and French-speaking, which have welcomed a multitude of immigrants from every continent who have made Canada their home; and we believe Canadians should nurture, indeed celebrate, this diversity.

We believe that Canada should recognize and affirm the fact that Quebecers are a predominantly French-speaking people. Quebec is home to a culture unique in North America.

We believe that the Canadian economic union should be strengthened.

We believe that Canada must continue to take measures to care for its citizens, including the children, the disabled, the old, the ill and the poor; we believe therefore in the maintenance of federal standards, established in collaboration with the provinces, for essential social programmes.

We believe that in Canada power should be exercised where it can best serve the people; that accordingly certain powers can best be exercised by the provinces

and certain powers exercised by the nation as a whole.

We believe that the federal government retains its special fiduciary responsibility for the Aboriginal peoples

9:20

Clearly, sir, I'd like to relate to you and thank the parents of a young man who spent three months in our home, just ending the Saturday before last, in an exchange program that certainly enlightened us as to the feelings of those that live in Quebec and those that have at least in part contributed to some of the difficulties we have had in this great nation. We had many a late evening chat, many around the dinner table with three teenagers. Besides eating copious quantities of food, they do speak a lot about the things that go on in their lives, and certainly having a fairly learned young man from Quebec learning to speak,

supposedly, English but learning to speak colloquial western Canadian teenage as opposed to English – nonetheless he did convey to us a great deal of the knowledge of how Quebecers feel about Canada. We found to our amazement that they knew so very little about how we felt about them and conversely they about us.

We found after much discussion that the information that was being delivered to them through their media and through their politicians was that of division. They did not know for a fact and were amazed that so many people in the flight to unity at the time of the referendum would come to essentially the centre of their Quebec, Canada, and deliver that kind of message without being paid for or without being prompted in some manner other than clearly their love for Canada. We found that the disdain for all that was Ottawa, as we find it mutually acceptable to do in Alberta as they do in Quebec, is very divisive, and we found that it certainly didn't contribute to anything.

As a culmination of this and the departure of this young man, there was a surprise party at our home with some seventy-five 16 and 17 year olds, and the significant part of it was that the only time he was allowed to speak French in our home, by the rules of the exchange, was that last night, and half the evening was spent chatting in French to a lot of these French immersion students. The coup de grâce of the evening, in true teenage fashion, was the burning of a certain piece of undergarment that was marked with the "oui" symbol over the fire in the backyard, which is kind of symbolic if you happen to be a teenager, seeing a 16-year-old's underwear that was propagating the separation of Canada being burnt over a fire. It has some kind of ironic significance if you happen to be a teenager. I do not happen to be that any longer.

Sir, these young people had a solution to the problem when I put it to them, and their solution was quite simply that if ordinary Canadians from Quebec and ordinary Canadians from the rest of Canada and particularly Alberta could speak to one another as people as opposed to through the media or through their politicians, the solution would be at hand. They're ordinary people looking for ordinary things and all believe that Canada is a great place to live. They just view it in different manners.

Finally, sir, I'd like to share with you some statements that I'm not going to be able to share with you, some wonderful statements of what people in my constituency believe Canada is to them. [Mr. White's speaking time expired]

Thank you, sir, for your time.

THE SPEAKER: Remarkable. You can have seventy-five 16 year olds over at your house for a party and still have a house the next day. This is quite enlightening.

MR. JONSON: Good evening, Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly. I'd like to begin my remarks this evening by tabling the responses from 320 constituents of Ponoka-Rimbey. In the very important debate that we are having this evening and have had today and will have over the next day or two, I think all of us have cause to reflect upon our impressions of Canada and our impressions of indications of Canadian unity and support and the value of the nation that has been experienced by us as individuals.

I would just like to use an example from my own experience that I thought was sort of relevant to the debate we're having. Three years ago I had the opportunity to visit Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. There were two things that happened there that I think bear upon the debate we're having this evening. First of all, we had the opportunity to tour the capital city and get a

rather thorough history lesson in the meetings which led to the formation of this great nation, which led to Confederation. One thing, I guess on the lighter side, that you could learn from those discussions was that it was probably during that influx of politicians and various assistants and so forth that Charlottetown recognized that there was a great industry that was going to be built in Canada called tourism, and they've never stopped working on that since. The important thing, however, in having that firsthand tour of the site of Confederation was that you certainly were left with the very, very clear impression that the formation of this nation was a time of greater problems, more difficulties, more challenges, and more issues to be resolved than we're currently facing in this nation. It is through that kind of leadership and effort that our country has grown and survived over the past century and a half.

The other impression from that particular visit that I think also bears upon the resolution before the Assembly and on the nature of our country and the nature of our country in the future is that it so happened that while we were in Prince Edward Island a husband and wife from Ponoka that we knew were involved in a very, very serious car accident. They were taken to hospital very quickly and given excellent care. We happened to find out that they had been injured and were able to visit the hospital over a period of three days. The impression we had was that the medical staff, the nurses, the people working in that hospital made a special effort, an extraordinary effort, to make sure that these people away from their family, away from their home, some hundreds and hundreds of miles away from Alberta, were given special care and attention. I don't think that is characteristic of all countries or all parts of the world. I think there was great pride in that part of Canada in being part of this nation, as I know we have here in Alberta and I think we do all across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's probably true to say that the other countries of the world that are aware of the debate that is taking place across Canada, when they think about it, if they do have the time, would probably have two impressions of Canada at this point in time. First of all, I think they would be quite envious of Canada. As has been referred to many times in the debate today, we are a country of resources in abundance, we have a democratic system of government, and we have the opportunity to speak freely in this Assembly and all across this country about the issue of Canadian unity and other matters pertaining to government. So they would be, I'm sure, envious of us. They would also be amazed we're even talking about and doubting our ability to continue to exist as a nation, because with all the advantages, all the things that we have going for us as Canadians, to be concerned about this country staying together is something that I'm sure is hard to understand for other parts of the world. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, it is an issue that is before us.

I would like to commend the Premier and the other first ministers for coming forward with the Calgary declaration. I think we learned this lesson during the last referendum in Quebec. Certainly the worst thing that can happen and the fact that would most feed, I think, a division within this country is the sense that other Canadians are felt by one part of Canada to not really care about their part in Canada, about them staying in Canada. Therefore, I think the overall idea of the Calgary declaration is an important one, one that I know is being debated all across this nation and I hope will have the effect that I'm sure is intended, that everybody will sit back and re-evaluate our place in Canada, come to the conclusion, which I think is the only possible conclusion, that we've got a great nation and we've got to keep it together and we've got to stay a part of it.

9:30

The process leading up to the formation of the resolution before the Assembly of course involved considerable discussion and consultation across this province. As other members have during the debate, I would like to just comment and share some of the results that came from the 320 citizens that filled out the questionnaire and returned them on the invitation that was extended.

Overall, the people out in Ponoka-Rimbey were supportive of the overall framework that is proposed, to the tune of, if you will, 74 percent yes, 11 percent no, and 15 percent still reflecting on it or neutral, I guess. The elements that they particularly supported were element 1, equality of Canadians, and element 2, equality of the provinces, and element 6, that if future amendments confer powers to one province, they must be available to all.

The element that was of concern was item 5 relative to the unique character of Quebec, and 52 percent of the respondents had concern in that area. I think that the concern for number 5 goes back to the points that my constituents felt so strongly about, and that is that there must be equality of provinces and there must be equality for all Canadians.

Looking through the responses, Mr. Speaker, I was impressed by the fact – and you cannot always be sure of exactly what age bracket the person was in that filled out the questionnaire. However, I think that by reading the questionnaires, the experiences that were shared, it was quite possible to come up with a rough categorization. I think it's significant that the people who made the most detailed comments about the importance of keeping this country together and who raised, I think, some of the best ideas about what is necessary to keep the country together were our seniors. I have to conclude that that is because they have lived through and feel that they have been part of building this nation to a greater extent than perhaps people in the middle-aged bracket. Our young people, our students have a great interest in keeping the country together because they're looking to it as a great place in which to live and spend their futures.

I would have to emphasize, though, Mr. Speaker, that when you look through those questionnaires and, also, as we have all had meetings across our constituency or visited the coffee shops, discussed this, I think we have to recognize that there are problems. I think they relate back to that basic set of areas of concern of equality, equitable treatment within our nation, not only that being done but appearing to be done, and the decisions that we make as government. Some of the things that were pointed out, which are hard to deal with, particularly when you're in business and industry, are such things as the difficulty in simply trading among provinces.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premiers for their leadership and the opportunity to speak in this debate.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [remarks in Ukrainian]

When the Ukrainian immigrants came to Canada, they settled throughout Canada. They wanted a better life for themselves and their children. My parents settled in Alberta, and other members of the family settled in Ontario and Quebec. Those in Quebec speak three languages: Ukrainian, English, and French. [as submitted]

Mr. Speaker, everybody has received a translation.

I grew up in the French community of Legal. Being of Ukrainian origin did not make a difference. We blended together,

we grew up together, we worked together, and we respected each other. When I look back and reflect, this is what makes us Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, this country, my Canada, is a diverse country comprised of numerous ethnic cultures: the aboriginal people, the English, the French, the Chinese, the East Indians, the Italians, the Germans, the Irish, the Arabs, the Lebanese, and I can go on. However, by working together, we have built this country to be a tolerant and compassionate nation, one of envy to the rest of the world.

In the consultation process, through open house, personal contacts, and some 160 written submissions, there is an overwhelming support for the framework presented. As a matter of fact, I took a reading, and about 71 percent agreed. Also, about 60 percent agreed that all provinces should be equal and have the same powers. In addition, we must recognize that Quebec is predominantly French-speaking and should preserve its language. Maybe they are unique, but so is every other province and the two territories in this beautiful country called Canada.

It's an honour to be able to rise in this Assembly and bring forward some comments made by the constituents of Redwater. I would like to read some of these comments. Some are positive; some are negative. Most of them have been positive. I would like to begin with one that comes from the Morinville area. It says:

It is the recognition as being unique as an individual. It is the pride I have in the belief that all people are equal, that as a young country, the people of Canada are made up of many nationalities slowly blending and evolving into what is the essence of a Canadian citizen. As proud as I am of my French and English ancestry, I have no desire to be classified as either French or English. I am a Canadian.

Another comment made is:

To belong to a tolerant, peace-loving compassionate country, to be able to share in cultural experiences across Canada . . . Yes, each Provincial Gov't needs to care for its Province, but their ultimate responsibility should be to Canada.

Any Premier who strives to destroy Canada should be fired & perhaps even charged with treason, as one person wrote.

Another one wrote:

I'm proud to be a Canadian and I am unique without gov't help . . . Every Canadian is unique, not just a few in the eastern extremities!

One final one from Legal. As a matter of fact, I went to school with both these people. They say:

Congratulations to the premiers for having had this dialogue on Unity. Thank you to Ralph for allowing Albertans to express their views. We agree with the framework's 7 elements. We think that in order to achieve unity and to keep the country together the Premier of Quebec must attend all meetings. We strongly believe that if Quebec has a vote on Separation then the rest of the country should have a vote also. Why is this a one way street? We would like to have the right to decide whether Quebec stays or goes.

If all Quebec wants is the word "distinct" in the Constitution we have no problems with it as long as no monetary implications are involved. If special monetary concessions are attached to the word distinct then we are not equal under the 1st fundamental element in your framework.

Thanks again for allowing us to express our views.

9:40

At this point, it gives me honour to table 160 submissions from the constituency of Redwater.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the constituents of Redwater for their input. I believe I speak for all of them when I say we should put our differences aside, grow to understand each other. Let's visit other provinces, and we'll soon see that we are not that different. I cannot envision Canada without Quebec or, for that matter, any other province or territory, for united we are truly a great nation. We are all Canadians. I am proud to be Canadian, and I will be supporting the Calgary framework.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, if memory of your biographies serves me correctly, the first 29 speakers who've participated in this special debate were all born in Canada. I'd now like to call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, who has chosen Canada as his country.

Hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to be part of this dialogue taking place nationally, and I approach this dialogue with a sense of history that has to be peculiar to me because of my own biography, as you have mentioned.

Two elements of my biography I would like to draw attention to. One, on March 16, 1962, I arrived on the shores of this beautiful country. I entered Canada through Montreal. Some of you might recall that there used to be an airline called TCA, Trans-Canada Airlines, the predecessor of Air Canada. The second part of my biography that's relevant to mention here, I think, is the fact that I was barely entering my teens when my country of birth went through separation and division. India at the dawn of independence in 1947 was divided into two countries, and the painful memories of that experience are with me to this day and will remain until the last moments of my life. I mention both of these things because they are important, I think, as we approach this debate, this dialogue with other fellow Canadians on the importance of keeping Canada together, seeking ways to achieve a national unity that we all can be proud of and can leave as a legacy to our children and their children.

Canada, of course, is a vast territory. We often try to describe it by using the term "sea to sea to sea": the huge vastness, the beautiful vastness – mountains, lakes, rivers, prairies – all of that.

It also of course has wonderful institutions. It is a society. There's something more to it than just the territory. It is that society, the elements that compose it, including its peoples, us as citizens with all the diversity that we represent, with all the qualities of compassion, understanding, tolerance that we stand for but also the institutions, the history of those institutions, the evolution of those institutions.

Publicly funded medicare in this country is an institution that gives us all great pride in our achievements. Educational institutions. This is a country where postsecondary education is essentially represented by a publicly funded complex of institutions. We never notice it because it's just part of us. We've always been part of it. We have benefited from it, but we never really record it as an important, unique feature of Canada that we have an education system from K to 12 and beyond, all of which is publicly funded, publicly supported, publicly developed and owned.

It is this sense of the uniqueness of Canada that I'm bringing through my experiences to share with my colleagues in this House but also to share this sense of the uniqueness of Canada with other Canadians, Albertans, and Canadians all across this beautiful land.

It is with that sense that I took the product of dialogue back to my constituents, Mr. Speaker. I held a constituency town hall meeting. It was widely advertised through the press, through posters, through these little cards that we sent to most of our constituents. I took part in two public forums at the university, one organized by social studies education students, teachers in training who are likely to be social studies teachers. They held a forum on campus. I spoke at that along with my colleagues from other parties, four of them.

I also took part in a forum organized jointly by the department of political science and the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Alberta dealing with the same issue. In addition, I spoke to two political science classes in a course which deals with Canadian politics, addressing these issues of this particular initiative that our Premiers took in Calgary on behalf of the governments of the nine provinces and of the two territories. I also spoke to two high school social studies classes. So there's a vast, fairly large process of consultation out of which I bring to this House the observations that I am trying to make within a very limited time.

Altogether, 432 responses were received from my constituents. Of these 432 in the formal questionnaire, 145 were an equivocal yes, expressing general agreement with the spirit of the initiative and its principles. One hundred and twenty-seven were also yes, strong yes, but accompanied with a concern with the future of the social institutions that Canadians have come to love and like: medicare, old age pensions, old age benefits, and so on and so forth. The third group of 120 had some reservations about some of the elements of the initiative, of the framework. Some of them were concerned about number 5. I think it would be inappropriate for us not to note some of the reservations of some of our fellow citizens, as Albertans have. So these 120 had some reservations about number 5 and a few others, but by and large they weren't ready to reject the initiative as such. They were conditionally supportive of it. Only 40 responses were straight no: it is not acceptable; it's the same old game. So it's less than, in fact, 10 percent of the respondents who said no. Ninety percent either conditionally said yes or said very strongly they wanted more than just a constitutional process to address the issue of national unity.

9:50

Mr. Speaker, I represent a constituency which obviously represents Canadian diversity: ethnic, cultural, social, and so forth. But there is a very special part of my constituency which is represented by a segment of the population that is French speaking, Francophone Albertans. I have received a letter from them, from the French Canadian Association of Alberta, copies of which I would like to table today. By this letter this association, which has a head office in my constituency, intends to inform this House that it has some serious concerns about this initiative that have to do with the absence of a clear statement recognizing their presence and their needs as a community which represents a minority official language and the protections that are needed in order to maintain their status in the province. I wish I could say more on this, but time does not allow, Mr. Speaker.

I want to make just two more points. I think the Calgary initiative is the right step in the right direction at the right time. It's not perfect, it's not complete, but it certainly is a very, very important first step in the direction of achieving the goal that all of us are committed to achieving; that is, national unity.

It has absent from it, of course, in an active form, the presence of the aboriginal voice. Also – and it's not the fault of the

Premiers – but absent from it is the voice of Quebec. We need to engage in dialogue. The next step, I think, has to be engaging Quebecers in this dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up. I think we need also to move in the direction of developing some sort of social charter that unites us, along with constitutional amendments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to share the response of my constituents to the framework for discussion on national unity. I believe the residents of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency appreciated the opportunity to express their views on this very important matter. The enthusiasm in the comments I received through written responses to the government's questionnaire, letters addressed to myself, and verbal remarks at town hall meetings in Innisfail and Sylvan Lake demonstrated to me that Albertans take the future of our country very seriously.

Of the 411 constituents who responded to the questionnaire, 161, or 39 percent, expressed unconditional support for the elements of the framework. When asked if they supported the document overall, some of my constituents' comments were as follows. W.F. Lawrence of Innisfail stated, "I believe that the Framework outlined fairly states the principal elements required for productive discussion." Herman Thorsen, also of Innisfail, said, "I think this has been very well thought out." Adam Graham of Delburne answered: "Yes, I think the Framework was well thought out and well worded. It expressed the views very well."

Others, while supportive of the framework, indicated that although it sounds good on paper, achieving the goals it sets out may not be easy. Sandra Lynch of Bowden's words were, "We feel the Framework is well defined in our beliefs as Canadians, but feel to achieve this 'ideal' framework will be difficult at best." Charles Scott of Bowden's concern was, "It was drawn up by representatives of Canadian provinces, but the province of Quebec did not participate."

Of the 170 respondents, 41 percent agreed with most of the ideas in the framework and recognized the importance of keeping the country together but had reservations about one or more points. The overriding concern was the reference to point 5, to the unique character of Quebec society. Many were afraid that this statement could be misinterpreted to mean that Quebec should receive special treatment over other provinces. The feelings of the majority of these writers could be summed up by Maurice Rodrigue of Springbrook's comment, "Each province is, in its own way, unique; not only Quebec." Roy and Dolores Sillars of Red Deer county's opinion: "The provinces are equal. We are all unique." Brian Kilbreath of Red Deer county felt, "Whenever we talk about equality and an element specific to 'one' province, the rest of the provinces/territories seem second class by their exclusion."

Mr. Speaker, 72 respondents, or 18 percent, did not support the framework. Most of those opposed expressed strong feeling that all Canadians must be treated the same, with no exception. Ken Hickford of Innisfail had this to say about the framework document, "It's better than the 'distinct society' idea, but still tends to unduly favour Quebec." Keith Glenn of Lousana said, "I'm not in favour of any more unity or constitutional talks or agreements with Quebec or any province that wants any special distinction."

Mr. Speaker, the remaining 2 percent of the respondents didn't address the national unity issue.

The common thread noticed among the majority of my constituents regardless of their particular stand on the framework document was pride in the country they call home. When answering "What does it mean to you to be a Canadian?", Megan Wolfe of Sylvan Lake replied: "I am free and have a good standard of living which I work for. Also Canada has a very respectful name in the world, for which I am proud." Ronald P. White of Sylvan Lake stated, "It is my birthplace, my heritage – I have lived in both East and West Canada and appreciate its diversity, beauty, and uniqueness." A Springbrook resident, W. Gray, said:

I feel lucky to be born in a country with so much space and riches
and as much freedom as any country on earth. Pride in a diverse
nation that can function as a whole has got to be the key.

Finally, Ray Mundell of Markerville took the initiative to develop an acrostic entitled *My Canada is Classic*. This acrostic, which spells out the words "The Maple Leaf" with the first letter of each line, reads as follows:

This Canada of ours is a glorious place!
Home of multicultural citizens from every land,
Each contributing a unique diversity.
Men and women with a passion for freedom,
All perceptive of equal opportunity;
People working for and planning unity,
Living together and learning to lead.
Each province, each person, committed partners.
Leaving none out, but embracing all,
Encouraging the promotion of our great land;
All working together in harmonious accord –
Forever united, forever a classic!

Mr. Speaker, national unity is an issue that is obviously very dear to Albertans' hearts, and it is imperative that every individual have the opportunity to contribute his or her thoughts on how the matter should be addressed. The residents of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake who took the time and made every effort to provide their input can feel confident that they indeed were heard. At this time I'd like to table 411 submissions on *My Canada Is . . .*

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a Canadian, and I'm proud to have a chance to speak on this very important issue, and I'd like to congratulate the Premiers of this country who initiated this effort to unite Canada.

10:00

One question that I was asked in one of the town hall meetings, which I couldn't answer, was: how do we get this information to the average Quebecker? We have to remember that we have a government in Quebec that is there to separate the country, and I don't know how we could reach them, and I would like to hear that, because it's filtered through the media. I think if the average Quebecker could hear and know the response of Albertans and the rest of Canadians, they'd be proud to be part of Canada.

Thank you.

MS GRAHAM: Mr. Speaker, as the representative for Calgary-Lougheed I rise to report to this Assembly about the nature of the unity consultation in my constituency and the results that came forth as a result of that.

It was my wish and my intention over the last two months to try and conduct a broadly based consultation in the community, and I was assisted in this regard by a young man from my constituency by the name of Kevin Chaney. He is a political science graduate from the University of Calgary, and when he found out

about this consultation, he came forward and offered his services. I was very pleased to give him an opportunity to get some practical experience, and I found him to be very hardworking. In fact, I encouraged him to perhaps look to joining the civil service, because I think we need new people to augment our somewhat aging civil service.

In any event, we attempted to consult on a fairly broad basis, and I did some door-knocking. I sent Kevin out as an advance guard, so to speak, and redelivered the unity questionnaire so that constituents would be prepared and ready to discuss the matter, and that was quite successful. As well, I included a discussion on unity in all of the scheduled meetings that I was conducting in the constituency anyhow. That included meeting with school council chairs, meeting with community association presidents, and as well I had a regular open house and of course meetings with individual constituents. I tried to engage them and did engage them in a conversation on this topic. As well, we talked to Scout and Guide leaders in the community and to small businesses. Mine is basically a residential constituency, so there weren't a lot of businesses, but we did seek them out. We also went to the grade 10 class at Henry Wise Wood high school. I also spoke with my constituency board at our last meeting, and we had quite a lively debate as we broke into groups on this topic.

Last but not least, we analyzed and reviewed the various written responses to the questionnaire, which in total came to 302 written responses received both here and in the constituency, and at this time I would like to formally file these with the Assembly.

So what did we find? Well, at this point in time in Calgary and in my constituency the overriding, most important issue on the minds of most of my constituents is the state of education funding in the province. Nevertheless, I did find most of my constituents to be very gracious, and they took the time to give their sincere thoughts on this topic of unity. I found them to be very well meaning in their responses to the various questions, and I think they were all quite cautiously hopeful that this Calgary framework would lead to something positive down the road.

Beyond that, first and foremost, I can say that there is general support for the Calgary declaration. However, a significant number of our respondents gave conditional support to the framework. They had reservations surrounding item 5, which will come as no surprise as a great many of the speakers ahead of me have already alluded to this. I can say that the degree of hostility toward item 5 was varied, but a large proportion of the respondents thought it was clearly problematic. Our analysis indicated that unless the framework were amended to either delete or change item 5, it's not clear that there would be wholehearted support for the framework.

In that this number 5 is such an irritant for many of my constituents, I think it's significant that many of them raised the fact they have great concern for the fact that Francophone Quebeckers are the only ones being explicitly recognized as unique in this framework. Many fear that the interests of non-Francophones in Quebec are not being protected by the framework. There is a genuine concern about the rights of non-Francophone Quebeckers by my constituents, and it's quite notable. In fact, a number of my constituents have experienced firsthand the feeling of being second-class citizens in Quebec.

When I was out door-knocking, I was at one household where I met with Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton and their neighbour Rolf Poirier. These people were all retired Quebeckers. They were born, raised in Quebec. They raised their own families there, and they spent all of their working lives there. They told me that they

could not tolerate any more of the deteriorating treatment of Anglophone Quebecers in Quebec and that they had noticed a real change in Quebec. It was for this reason they felt compelled to leave, and that was despite the fact they were leaving their own children and grandchildren there, who felt that they couldn't leave because of the employment commitments they had. But these people were quite relieved to be out of Quebec. According to them, when Quebec decided to crack down on Anglophone Quebecers, Quebec no longer was a part of Canada. Mr. Pemberton, who I learned was a cousin of Supreme Court Justice Antonio Lamer, told me that from his experience he doubted very much that the two nations theory would be of any interest to Quebecers. In his view, for Quebecers their country is Quebec; it is not Canada.

I was personally very troubled to hear that, because I don't really know of any Canadians who don't feel welcome in their own country, particularly here in our province of Alberta. I think that we as a country cannot allow the rights of non-Francophones in Quebec to continue to be eroded by separatist governments. This isn't about special protection for Quebec Anglophones. It's about the fundamental equality of all Canadians that must be guaranteed in this framework.

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents are as well very tired of what they see as continually conceding special privileges to Quebec, and the feeling is that the more they get, the more they demand. There are calls by some of my constituents to include a section in the framework outlining the consequences of separation. Many constituents want to have it made known to Quebecers that they cannot separate and continue to enjoy the benefits of Canadian citizenship that they have thus far enjoyed.

According to another respondent, with B.C. now musing about separating over frustration with the control of its natural resources, it is time to spell out the conditions of separation and shut down separatist fervour in all parts of the country once and for all. Overall it is the feeling of many of my constituents that it is time to stop placating Quebec and to get on with moving Canada forward. In the same breath they say: those regions of Canada that don't wish to go along can stay behind at their own peril.

On the other hand, there are other constituents of Calgary-Lougheed that have taken a more conciliatory approach toward Quebec, and one respondent indicated that there is no denying that Quebec is distinct, so long as distinct does not mean special.

10:10

Another resident, also an ex-Montrealer whom I talked with when I was door-knocking, said that it was her view that the majority of Quebecers are proud to be Canadian and proud of our multicultural society. That was certainly her view. She had moved from Quebec for other reasons, and she just commented on what a wonderful melting pot Montreal used to be with different cultures and that it was really a separatist minority that is causing all of the turmoil.

I could say a lot more, but in conclusion, on behalf of my constituents I wish to support the motion endorsing the Calgary declaration.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MRS. PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand with great honour and with great importance to speak to this great issue, the

Calgary declaration. Canada is a great country. It has to stay united, and we need to do whatever we can to keep it that way. I love Canada the way it is. I have lived in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and, obviously, Alberta and have found that all the provinces are unique and that each province offers its own history, beauty, and diversity.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the leaders of each of our three parties – Premier Ralph Klein; the Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Grant Mitchell; and the leader of the ND Party, Ms Pam Barrett – for putting their political differences aside to deal with and discuss as one voice this very important issue, national unity.

Of the 248 responses that I received from my constituents, only 14 opposed the Calgary declaration, leaving me with a clear mandate to support the process and its conclusions. I would like to share with this Assembly five comments that clearly outline the unique and diverse comments that I received from my constituents. I believe that these five comments represent in a clear and strong voice what Edmonton-Castle Downs wants to be united for and to be heard in this House. At the conclusion of the five comments that I will recite in the House, I am going to read a unity poem by Mr. Ed Cook. Mr. Cook delivered this poem to me in June, before the Calgary declaration.

Now I will quote from my first constituent.

I have done some teaching stints in several "third" and "second world" countries and have been astonished at the high esteem that Canada enjoys in other parts of the world. I hope we live up to our reputation as a country that welcomes immigrants and refugees; that cares for the disadvantaged, the ill and the poor; that makes education and health care top priorities; that offers opportunities for women to advance in the economic and political domain. And let's us be generous in our foreign aid to developing countries!

I'll quote the second constituent:

I hope and pray that everything possible will be done to keep our country united, tolerant and free. I want all provinces and all Canadians to feel proud to be part of a Canada from sea to sea. No person or province should be able to have greater powers than all the remaining provinces and territories. It is one for all and all for one.

My third quote:

I have lived in Winnipeg, Montreal, Quebec City, Halifax and Toronto, and now Edmonton. In each place there is something wonderful and uniquely Canadian.

After 10 years in the U.S. . . . I chose to return home, and it wouldn't have mattered much which province. I was returning to a place where a person is respected (and rewarded) for his and her worth, relatively unaffected by race, language, social class, wealth or "connections." For me that is why Canada is the best place in the world to live.

My fourth comment:

I am very happy that our three political parties have worked together in supporting this process.

It is important to put Canada first.

Thank you for requesting our input.

My fifth:

The knowledge that I belong to a democratic society, built on a solid foundation of honesty, strength of character, mutual respect, and with a recognition of the fact that our diversity is in fact a strength. Past Canadians have blazed a trail in the world that has garnered tremendous respect from other nations. We need to continue to work to ensure Canada retains a dignified status among the nations of the world.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know the hour is late, but I would like to read my poem:

What do we want our Canada to be?
 United in spirit from sea to sea
 Both English and French living side by side
 with Tranquility and Peace far and wide
 A Country to be proud of, you will see
 Canada, the true North still strong and free.
 I know we can live with patriotic love
 If we try real hard and get help from above
 Our glowing hearts will beat hard and strong
 As we see our country unite in song
 Signs of character, and peace like a dove,
 Vastly strengthened, we fit like a glove!
 The Fleur-de-lis, the Maple Leaf
 Are both symbols of strength, that's our belief,
 So let's get together and be aware,
 Show each other how we really do care –
 Keep Canada as one without any grief
 United in spirit from reef to reef!
 The Separatists can say what they might,
 But we'll never give up without a fight
 This nation was built by the strong and the able,
 Both immigrants and our Native people –
 Let's not do anything out of revenge or spite,
 We'll all stick together, and do it right!
 It's time our politicians got the word,
 Give them the message and be sure it's heard
 Canadians want a united land,
 Regional equality seen first-hand,
 Health Care benefits that we can afford
 And Income Taxes that are not absurd!
 If Cartier and Champlain could talk to us
 I'm sure they would say – what's all the fuss?
 We've lived together for four hundred years
 Now is not the time to start shedding tears,
 So come, everyone, let's get on the bus
 And keep us all together – that's a must!
 Now, let's all spread the news from dusk till dawn
 Any fears or doubts are permanently gone
 From British Columbia in the West,
 to Quebec and Newfoundland, and the rest,
 We are all in agreement – “Il est bon”!
 Congratulations – tous sans exception!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, 123 years ago a small fort settled in for its first winter in what is now Alberta on a small island in the middle of the Oldman River. That first settlement was the origin of what was to become my hometown of Fort Macleod. That was the home of the first detachment of the North-West Mounted Police in southern Alberta.

They were sent as part of Sir John A. Macdonald's national policy, perhaps the first attempt at building unity in this country. The force, which included many troopers from French Canada, drove west to protect and maintain the values that all Canadians believe in. The North-West Mounted Police were sent west to establish a national presence in the prairies and to create the environment where peace, order, and good government could be maintained. This contrasted sharply with the lawlessness which extended in America at the time.

10:20

In the 1860s circumstances arose, particularly the American Civil War, which caused British North America to consider the

desirability and perhaps the necessity of uniting for mutual protection. Transportation and trade arguments were also driving home the practical advantages of Confederation. Even today free trade and interprovincial trade barriers still exist and prevent us from doing more trade with the eastern provinces and Quebec.

The first definite step towards Confederation was taken in 1864, when delegates from the Maritime provinces met in Charlottetown to discuss the union of the three Maritime provinces and were persuaded by delegates from Canada to consider a larger union. They met the same year in Quebec and drafted the terms of the British North America Act. That act was passed in May of 1867 and came into effect on July 1, with Sir John A. Macdonald as Prime Minister. He chose four cabinet members from Ontario, four from Quebec, and two each from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Canada could now proceed to build its continentwide future.

In 1874, the year the North-West Mounted Police established Fort Macleod, a Member of Parliament by the name of Edward Blake made the statement: the future of Canada depends very much on the cultivation of a national spirit. You see, Mr. Speaker, the same problems faced our nation then as they do now. Canada was trying to reconcile the differences between French and English Canada as well as dealing with regional differences across a huge expanse of land. Because of the early efforts of the Mounted Police, the Canadian west was able to develop without the violence which was seen across the border to the south. Instead, people came from all over the globe, attracted to what seemed like Columbus's new world, and immigrated to Canada and to Alberta.

One thing that became very prominent in my consultation on this issue, especially with the high school students throughout my constituency, was that unlike the United States this country, Canada, had not taken the melting-pot approach to multiculturalism. We are a mosaic. Each province within Canada is different from all the rest both culturally and historically. Within each province are distinct cultures and heritages which make different areas unique within the province and within the country. For example, Nova Scotia has strong Gaelic, French, and African communities. In Quebec the heritage of the native people is as varied as the nonnative population. The Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories has eight official languages, recognizing its cultural diversity. Manitoba enjoys and celebrates a wide variety of cultures ranging from Métis, Icelandic, and Caribbean as well as having a large Francophone population. In Alberta we are the home of a wondrous variety of cultures ranging from our proud native peoples to immigrants from Holland, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Germany, and America as well.

Some of our families migrated to Canada several years ago, whereas some of us have recently become Canadians. The Crownsnest Pass in my constituency is a model example of this. Ninety years ago many people moved into the area when the coal mines there opened up. Miners from Italy, Poland, Great Britain, Germany, Russia, including Ukraine, all came to southwestern Alberta to work and raise families and become Canadians. Today their grandchildren are proud Canadians. Although they are aware and respectful of their area's history and multicultural roots, they are living proof that cultural diversity contributes to their strong community just as Canada's provincial diversity makes it a stronger nation. Clearly we are all unique.

In questioning what it means to be Canadian, it is helpful to define what Canada is. This is a problem which has plagued nation-builders for decades. A definition of our national identity

has been as elusive as national unity itself has. Mr. Speaker, whenever the topic of national identity comes up, almost always a comparison is made to the United States. The U.S. appears to be a nation which is unified and patriotic almost to the extreme. For its citizens, national identity simply means the ability to say that they are American, and that's enough.

A Canadian, however, can go anywhere in the world and be warmly accepted because they are Canadian. Despite this, Canadians often seem insecure in their inability to as clearly and succinctly define their national identity. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that inability is part of our national identity. We are a nation made of several different cultures. That is why as Canadians we can enjoy a cultural bond through such things as curling, lacrosse, maple syrup, and le Bonhomme. When you look at the influence of Canadians and Canadian culture upon the world, Canada has made its mark in the world.

It is our heritage which makes us Canadian. All of us have shared elements of a common history. All of us have come to this country at one point or another. We have all chosen to be Canadians and continue to strive and uphold the vision each of us has of what it means to be Canadian. This is why my constituents submitted over 500 responses to the Calgary framework. In their responses and in discussions with myself they expressed their feelings on the future of their country.

Overall they support the framework. However, the people of Livingstone-Macleod also want closure on the issue of unity; 130 years of unfinished business is enough. They want Canadians to make the decisions, not the politicians. They want Canadians to end the discussion and move on with the future of our nation, preferably with Quebec in it. My constituents said that nobody should be a hyphenated Canadian. Canadians come first and foremost, and then you're an Albertan, a Manitoban, an Ontarian, a Québécois, or a Newfoundlander. No one should have more or either special or distinct status than any other, because we are all governed and protected by the same laws.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this month I had the pleasure of attending the re-enactment of a flag raising ceremony. This flagpole was a reconstruction of one that used to stand over the original parade grounds of the North-West Mounted Police garrison at Fort Macleod. As the Union Jack was raised once again over the same ground where the original North-West Mounted Police stood, those that were there present to witness that event as well as myself were filled with enormous pride. In light of the fact that the flag that was fluttering was the Union Jack, we all felt very Canadian. We all felt very proud of our local heritage as well as the traditions which form the basis of our culture and the basic values of peace, order, and good government, which we defend and try to maintain in this Assembly, in our own homes, and in our towns, all of which are a part of Canada, part of my Canada, part of our Canada, all of which are a part of the vision our Premier has asked the constituents of Livingstone-Macleod through me to participate in.

I thank the Premier, and I thank you for this opportunity to share my constituents' concerns. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. I just want to run out and buy myself a lacrosse club. I was getting so excited about that new sport that we've got.

It's been a long day so I'm going to recognize one additional speaker. We'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this

opportunity to speak today on behalf of my constituents, the constituents of Calgary-East, on this very important issue. I have heard from many of my constituents over the last three and a half months. I have had heartfelt conversations and read very sincere responses. They have clearly taken this opportunity to think about and express what Canada means to them and their families. We asked them to tell us about their Canada, and they did it with enthusiasm. I sincerely thank them, and I appreciate them for their input.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that to make this a meaningful dialogue, each Canadian needs to be asked fundamentally: what does Canada mean to you? Canadians need to talk about this in grassroots terms which surpass political motives. We need to talk about the good things that happen in Canada, why we want to be here, and what kind of a country we want to leave for our children and grandchildren. We need to remember why our families immigrated here, whether it was last year or 150 years ago. There is a common ground, and we are at a point in our history where we need to find it again.

10:30

Mr. Speaker, I have considered what Canada means to me. To me Canada is a great partnership, and each one of us is an equal partner. To me Canada is a large family, and each one of us is a member of that family. To me Canada is not only part of a large continent which stretches from sea to sea to sea, not only Great Lakes and beautiful Rocky Mountains but a community of communities. To me Canada is a proud nation, proud of its people, their ethnic mix, and their language, religious and cultural diversity.

Mr. Speaker, many nations and people from around the world envy us as Canadians. Many people would give up everything they know and have for the chance to live in Canada. Those very same people are amazed that we are trying to split up and dismantle this beautiful country. It is a shame that we cannot see the competition we sometimes create between cities within the province and even areas within cities that can lead to division on a larger level. We must work to dismantle these misunderstandings and to understand the people we may not understand. Canadians have a very strong capacity for tolerance and understanding on an individual level. [interjections] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to focus on expanding this understanding to a national level.

Mr. Speaker, our concerns are far different from those found in other nations, and perhaps this is what has brought us to the point we are at today. We are a wealthy country, and we have a stable and respected government structure, an effective and respected judicial system, safe communities, and entrenched social programs. We have achieved a combination of a tolerant society, political stability, and economic wealth which is second to no other nation in the world. This is an accomplishment we can and should all be very proud of.

Mr. Speaker, this unfortunately seems to be easily taken for granted by many Canadians. I have had the opportunity to live and travel outside of Canada on many occasions. I know how good I feel to say that I'm a Canadian, and I know how people react when I say I am a Canadian. Our reputation simply precedes us. We are well respected internationally, and we have earned this respect. They, however, do not understand why we have such divisive internal politics and why we let this continue. They can see our potential. They can see the good things which occur in Canada. I ask: why can't we?

Mr. Speaker, beyond our international reputation we need to

look internally to see what outsiders see. They see a vast nation made up of individuals from all corners of the globe who call Canada their home. They see individuals who live and work within communities where we find support and acceptance. These communities are based on a variety of social criteria: language, ethnic origin, cultural background, political associations, professional associations, age, education, and even the area we live in. We have found a way to marry the very diverse aspects of our lives to a network of community support. This is the strength of our society.

Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of our common ground in comments made by the Hon. Romeo LeBlanc when he became our Governor General. He said:

When I was a child in New Brunswick, my village was my world and next door was another world, another village. My world was French and Catholic. The world next door was English and Protestant.

On summer Sundays after early morning church, when we set off to pick marsh greens, we walked slowly past other churches and wondered about people who worshipped God by singing congregational hymns in the afternoon.

The people who sang these hymns in turn wondered about us trailing down to the marshes to pick exotic plants for our supper, exotic plants like sanfire greens. In our separate villages we lived our separate lives in our separate worlds, except when a fire destroyed a barn. Then families with names like Cornier and Taylor worked shoulder to shoulder putting up a new one. When one family fell on hard times, another family was there to help. Very often these different families did not worship at the same church or even share a common language.

But there were important things we did share and we still share. We share the land, we share the forest, we share the water. Our herds drank from the same spring. We shared and learned from each other. We learned from our differences as we did and still do from our similarities.

Then there was a war, and we died together not as English or French speaking, not as easterners and westerners, not as

Christians or Muslims or Jews or Baha'i or Buddhists or Sikhs, not as immigrants or natives, but as Canadians. I wonder if this is any different today. I don't think so!

Mr. Speaker, former Secretary of State David Crombie very appropriately said in his book what it means to be a Canadian:

I am the son of a Scottish immigrant. But as a Canadian I am an Englishman, a Frenchman, an Italian, a Netherlander, a Scandinavian, an Asian, an Inuit, and a Cree. I am a part of them and they are indeed a part of me.

Mr. Speaker, I'll end with this letter that I received from a well-known Canadian unity promoter by the name of Roger Richard from Calgary. He said:

I honestly and sincerely believe that this is the best country on Earth, and it is incumbent upon all of us to work very hard to keep it that way. We can only keep it if we understand each other's differences and respect them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would like to move adjournment.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Before I recognize the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, it's been a long day, ladies and gentlemen and hon. members. I sincerely hope – to the Minister of Labour and to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and to the Minister of Family and Social Services – that the participation by two of your colleagues, the hon. Member for Livingston-Macleod and the hon. Member for Calgary-East, really did not interrupt the private conversation you were having. The ultimate rudeness in this House is for an hon. member to yap between one of his own colleagues and the chair, and you might want to consider that in the future.

[At 10:38 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

