

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, December 9, 1997**

7:00 p.m.

Date: 97/12/09

[The Speaker in the chair]

THE SPEAKER: Please be seated.

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.

[Adjourned debate December 9: Mrs. Laing]

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, for over 130 years we Canadians have prided ourselves as being a fair and just society, an open and accommodating people, and we've made Canada a land of boundless opportunity for literally millions of people. In fact our great nation was founded on principles of justice, liberty, humanitarianism, and equality of opportunity. We stood true to our beliefs and defended them vigorously during the great world wars, and many Canadians made the supreme sacrifice at that time by giving their lives for their and our beliefs and for the future of Canada.

As Canadians we have been acknowledged and thanked and revered and congratulated as world leaders. In many ways Canada has pioneered a new way of thinking and living by embracing our founders and ancestors and by enshrining rights and freedoms which are the envy of the entire world. We know we have the best country in which to live and so does everyone else, but in spite of our greatness as a federalized nation, various forces are requiring us to re-examine and even redefine who we are, where we've been, and indeed where we are headed.

Today's debate on unity furthers this endeavour, and I am pleased to inform you, Mr. Speaker, that nearly 300 of my constituents participated directly in this process by responding to the Dialogue on Unity questionnaire. For my part, as the representative of Mill Creek I co-hosted a joint town hall meeting on unity with my colleagues from Edmonton-Ellerslie and Edmonton-Mill Woods, and I hosted a unity open house at my constituency office. I also spoke with students at five different schools in my area including an informative and very valuable question-and-answer session at J. Percy Page composite high school. In addition to this, I did several mail-outs of information and personally responded to about 100 telephone calls, faxes, and E-mails.

As of today, I report the following results. Seventy-eight percent of my respondents supported the framework of the Calgary declaration in total or for the most part, albeit with the occasional qualifier. Thirteen percent of the respondents did not support the framework at all. Eight percent did not give any

indication as to whether they supported it or not; in other words, they did not answer question number 1, and one person said "maybe."

The majority of my respondents' general comments can be summed up in a few sentences. First, they want Canada to remain united, and they want Canadians to stick together. Secondly, they want every Canadian to be treated equally and fairly in all matters. Thirdly, they do not want any province to be given special powers, special status, or any special treatment. Some commented on what it might take and/or cost to survive and retain full nationhood. Others wanted to know how far we should go to preserve our union and what we might lose if Quebec were to separate. Many indicated that they understand and respect Quebec's history and its reality and even support its uniqueness.

Indeed, if you have ever spent any significant amount of time in the province of Quebec, as I have on numerous occasions, you would agree that Quebec society is somewhat different than any other province, but it's still Canada. With its own tradition of civil law and finance and its French-speaking majority and so on, it may have developed a unique culture, but it's still Canada.

However, some respondents were less accommodating and wondered how Quebec views itself in our federation. For example, they asked me why Quebec's Legislature is referred to as a National Assembly while all other provinces referred to their provincial houses as Legislatures and what significance this implied.

Some constituents presented a so-called third option for national unity by rebuilding our country and by reclaiming our heritage. They did not see separatism in Quebec as offering anything constructive to national matters. They proposed constitutional changes or at least stricter adherence to what is already enshrined therein, particularly with respect to clauses 91 and 92, as found on pages 26 through 32 of the Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982. My constituent, Peter Young, is well versed in those matters.

Now, while I understand that today's brief debate is not aimed specifically at the Constitution, it is important to note that it is in fact that Constitution which binds us and guides us a nation. It should therefore be further explored and employed to gain a deeper understanding of what we can or cannot do as individuals and as individual provinces in the cause of unity and other national matters.

Mr. Speaker, I am a Canadian of Ukrainian ancestry living in Alberta, but I am first a Canadian. To me being a Canadian does not mean giving up my ancestral heritage. It does not mean giving up my provincial roots or anything else that makes me who and what I am. As a Canadian I respect those personal roots, all of them, and I fully respect those of every other Canadian. It is that respect, understanding, and acceptance – and I stress the word "acceptance" as opposed to "tolerance" – that makes all of us unique in our own special way. I will never give up on those beliefs, and I will never give up on my country, Canada, and I will not give up on trying to do everything I can to keep it united.

My Canada includes everyone and every province as an equal partner regardless of uniqueness, regardless of multicultural or aboriginal realities, and regardless of where people live. When this chapter of our history gets written, it is my sincere hope that the Calgary declaration will stand out as a document and a process that made a positive difference toward our cause of national unity.

In the few remaining moments that I have allotted to me, I'd like to share just a few of the many comments submitted to me by my constituents. Al Wiedner writes:

We are not the great melting pot like the U.S.A.! All the world's cultures come together to form Canada, where we are all equal, whether or not we were born here.

Fay Longson writes: "I'm very proud to be an Albertan but more proud to be a Canadian."

Janice Cieselski tells us about what it means to her to be a Canadian.

To be a Canadian means to live in a democracy where education and health care are accessible to all, where equality and freedom of speech are protected rights, and where prosperity of the country is equally shared.

Bill Dosser tells us:

Absolutely No to unique society for Quebec. You cannot believe in sections 1 & 2 and then say one province or one type of people are unique.

K. Barry tells us:

I do not understand what the people of Quebec want. The Quebec govt. seems to be power hungry, a disease not uncommon to politicians.

It might be well worthwhile to educate Western Canadians about the wants of Quebecers, whatever they are.

L'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta has provided a letter to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, which she received beyond her speaking time, and I'm just going to quote to you what they say.

The constant diminishing of the status of our communities is of concern to us as it weakens the status of French in Canada and provides ammunition to the separatists in Quebec who want to believe that the francophone communities outside Quebec are disappearing. They use this weakening as a basis for their conclusion that only separation will protect the French language in Quebec.

Je voudrais dire quelque chose aussi en français, parce que je comprends bien l'histoire du Québec et aussi tout ce que les citoyens ont dit sur le sujet de la séparation. Mais il y a l'autre côté aussi, M. le Président. De l'autre côté on doit parler aussi sur le sujet de notre avenir et notre unité aussi comme un pays uni.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say a few words in French, because I understand Quebec's history and I understand everything that citizens there are saying about separation. However, on the other hand, we have not yet heard enough from them about unity and about our future as a united country. [as submitted]

[Remarks in Ukrainian] I also want to say a few words in Ukrainian, the language I first learned as a child. I must tell you that my ancestors chose to emigrate to Canada not so much for themselves but for the future of their children and grandchildren. Our Ukrainian pioneers helped immensely in the settlement and development of Canada, and we are grateful to them and to other Canadian immigrants from all cultures for what they have done in the past and continue to do today. [as submitted]

7:10

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by simply thanking all of my constituents for their views and also the Premier, our leader, and the leader of the NDs for the tremendous spirit of co-operation with which they embarked on this endeavour. I believe the Calgary declaration will be a historical turning point in our province.

Finally, I also want to thank all the MLAs for the tremendous decorum that has been displayed during this debate in this House. It's refreshing to know that we can come together on an issue as critical and important as this. Wouldst it were so for so many other issues, Mr. Speaker.

My time is ringing off, but I'd like to conclude with a viewpoint expressed to me by my constituent, Mrs. Schultz.

All these so-called do-gooders that want to break this country up

should live in a communist country for only five years to know what freedom means.

My family shed tears of joy when we came to Canada. We were very poor, but we were free.

Mr. Speaker, with that I'll take my leave and simply say God bless my home, my Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

MRS. TARCHUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rising today to speak on Canadian unity is not only my pleasure; it is an honour and a duty. I was given the opportunity to be the voice of my constituents less than a year ago and will use that voice today to carry the message here and hopefully across Canada on what our Canada is. My comments reflect reading the views of literally hundreds of constituents, one of the highest returns in the province, and participating in four community meetings throughout Banff-Cochrane. The number of responses indicates the importance of this issue to many.

I'd like to thank those who took the time to fill out the householder, and I appreciated the numerous stories, poems, articles, and drawings sent to me. Hopefully all of my constituents will see a reflection of some of their thoughts and aspirations in this statement.

In this short time I would like to focus on feedback received on the process, values identified as being important to Canadians, reaction to the elements of the Calgary declaration, and finally comment on some overriding themes and important questions raised.

Overall, residents valued the approach that the Premiers and territorial leaders undertook to have a grassroots dialogue. As Lisa from Lake Louise pointed out, "I like the broader focus on Canadian unity and what it means to be Canadian." Paul from Cochrane promoted Peter Drucker's statement, "The propaganda stops when the dialogue starts," and Randy from Canmore says:

I think the process you have started is good. Having all Canadians participate validates the credibility of a discussion on national unity.

Others saw value in the nonpartisan approach, and no one emphasized this better than my Liberal opponent in the last election, who proudly stood up at a community meeting and proclaimed: my Canada even includes Ralph. I just wanted to see who's awake here.

During these community meetings we always started with an activity that gave everyone the opportunity to explain what it meant to them to be Canadian. As you can imagine, there were a myriad of answers. However, what was consistent was that we value tolerance, caring, fairness, and equality, and it is predominantly these values that underlie the feedback given on each of the seven elements in the declaration. The following only captures the essence of that feedback, but I have documented hundreds of ideas and specific suggestions on the principles and possible wording.

Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming majority of people in Banff-Cochrane agree in principle to the Calgary declaration but with some trepidation. The discussions and written responses indicate concern with the lack of clear definition for terms such as "equal," "status," and "powers." My constituents, like all Canadians, are pragmatic. They suggested that because Canadians are not all equal in ability, wealth, and often opportunity, we need to reference "equal" to before or under the law. Our laws should continue to be indifferent to those inequities and our rights equally protected by law both as individuals and provinces. We need to better define status to reflect intent. Provinces may not have

equality of status in a constitutional sense. However, if any province has any rights, then those rights ought to extend to all provinces.

With respect to "powers," we question how "unique" would be interpreted by the courts. It is unacceptable if a province can use their uniqueness to obtain additional powers over other provinces. We feel both "power" and "protection" need further defining.

Many expressed the same sentiments as James, from Bragg Creek: "I want Quebec as part of Canada, but not at any cost." Canadians demonstrate diversity, tolerance, compassion, and equality. To say we are graced by these values takes some of the importance away. Are Canadians passive recipients of this enviable status? Mr. Speaker, we have these things not because we let them happen but because we made them happen.

The fourth and fifth elements created the most discussion and difference of opinions, however not because of a lack of desire for a united Canada. Banff-Cochrane constituents felt we are and should be Canadian before anything else. We all have unique backgrounds, have made life choices. Each person may not have the same opportunities in life as others may, but as Canadians we are equal.

Equality, Mr. Speaker, is a difficult concept for Canadians to put aside. We are in a bit of a quandary with the issue of recognizing a province's uniqueness while trying to ensure equality among the citizens. We encourage differences in cultures, backgrounds, religions, and languages, yet when we are asked to specifically identify one of those qualities as unique, we struggle with that. Canadians cherish their sameness and equality. We do not see one group better or more right than the other; we are all equally important. This point was reiterated over and over again in the responses. As one respondent from Springbank put it: "While we acknowledge and respect our differences, we are called increasingly as Canadians to value our commonalities." Our unique features and varied heritages add to our strength as a nation, but it is the things we share in common and the values we all hold that bind us as a people.

Many felt that the mention of three founding peoples should be expanded to describing Canada's gift of diversity as including all cultures, a vitality of languages, and a citizenry drawn from all parts of the world. Others, however, viewed acknowledging the unique character of Quebec as simply recognizing reality and an important gesture that cost non-Québécois nothing but says something important to the people of Quebec. To get around these differences, some offered that we stay away from any recognition of anything suggesting special status but forcefully endorse that it is Quebec's presence in the Canadian federation that is "fundamental to the well-being of Canada."

Mr. Speaker, I think what was equally important in constituents' responses to individual principles of the declaration were the evident themes. Frustration exists surrounding clearly unsuccessful years of constitutional talks, and there is cynicism towards those involved in those talks. To many the status quo of the current federal/provincial governance model is no longer acceptable, and these framework principles are a start towards changing that model. Some think we need to remind ourselves that it is our history that has taught us tolerance. As Esme from Canmore stated:

I strongly feel that the coexistence of 2 cultures in a mutually respectful climate promotes tolerance of the increasing diversity of the Canadian population.

Others viewed our national unity struggle as natural growing pains and evolving. As Tracy from Cochrane recommends: "We have to continue to make the Canadian experiment work to

maintain the enviable status we now have." Some are concerned that the unity issue is an ongoing struggle that costs too much and without some pending resolution will "suck the breath out of this country."

Mr. Speaker, the most important theme of all was the interest in ensuring that these views be shared with the people of Quebec, not the politicians, not the bureaucrats, but the people. It is for them that we write this message. It is with them we care to share our views. It is to them we say, as Donna from Canmore states: "We have a profound respect for Quebecers and what their culture contributes to Canada." A resident from Springbank indicates: "We're not negative regarding this issue. In true reality we are positive regarding this negative issue."

We would like to ask Quebecers if they aren't far more secure and privileged in a strong, co-operative Canada than they can possibly be in small, divided, separate Quebec. We would like to better understand the answers to such questions. We would like to know which parts of our current system truly do not meet their needs and how we can better it for all Canadians.

Many respondents who have had the opportunity of living in Quebec are convinced that the average Quebecer shares the desire for a strong Canada with equal opportunity for all. We would like to hear from them. We would like to talk with them about the benefits of being Canadian. As Tara from Canmore observes:

The sense of national unity in Canada has blossomed in the past few years. It is important that our national pride continues to grow and that all Canadians realize each province and person has something to offer Canada as a whole. We are not Canada with part of us missing.

As we take this step in making our country one, we also want Quebec citizens to understand our needs. Mr. Speaker, we as Albertans and as Canadians are willing to look at Quebec as important and unique in their many ways and would hope that Quebec is willing to accept Alberta's and the west's uniqueness. We want the people of Quebec to understand fully that we are here today to ensure they remain a valued and important part of Canada.

7:20

Finally, through the dialogue we have put political differences aside in an effort to show Quebec, Canada, and the world our solidarity for our country and our people.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to end today with two quotes. Bern of Banff advises that

to put things in their proper perspective one has to travel to other countries to appreciate what we have and how fortunate we are that Canada is our home. This country has the resources, beauty, tolerance, freedom, safety and more advantages that are too numerous to mention here. It is important that Quebec remains.

As a gentleman from Exshaw adds:

I am a proud Canadian. My Canada includes Quebec. We would all be the poorer if separation was to happen. Let's not let that happen.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this debate on this issue and, in closing, would like to table Banff-Cochrane's Dialogue on Unity responses. Thank you.

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to share with you the views of the constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake and where they stand on the issue of national unity.

First, I wish to thank all the constituents who took of their time and effort to correspond and share their views. The consultation process included letters, phone calls, faxes, the responses in the

unity brochures, and participation at two public unity meetings. The students of two schools also participated: grades 2, 7, 9, and 12 from Glendon school and the grade 12 students from l'école Notre Dame high school in Bonnyville.

Mr. Speaker, the youth of this province are very concerned about the future of Canada. As they are tomorrow's leaders, it is important that they reflect upon the unity issue and share their views. Also, several constituents have asked me to express their gratefulness to the Premier for the bottom-up process of consultation. The process was a true form of democracy, and they appreciated the opportunity of participating.

The level of support for the Calgary declaration by the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituents is as follows: in support, 86 percent; in support but with some conditions, 9 percent; not in support, 5 percent. However, Mr. Speaker, even though the support of the framework was high, there were several views and opinions expressed. I will attempt to share these with you.

The most common opinion was that all Canadians are equal. This is a statement of fact and is entrenched in the Canadian Constitution. On this point at one of the public meetings a recommendation was extended to our leaders. It was felt that often our leaders focus only on our Canadian differences and that very rarely do they speak to Canadians as being equals.

A grade 12 student, John Pardell from Notre Dame high school, wrote: "All Canadians should be considered equal and treated as such, regardless of any differences." This statement reflects the opinions of many of the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituents. It was mentioned often that we are Canadian, period. We must no longer place emphasis on labeling ourselves as French-Canadian, English-Canadian, Ukrainian-Canadian, or First Nation-Canadian. This focuses on our differences rather than our equalities.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the world Canadians are respected as being tolerant and compassionate. We have often been described as being very apologetic. These qualities are what make all Canadians unique, which leads me to principle 5 of the framework. The word "unique" in its description of the character of Quebec society was a point of concern. Most constituents agreed that in the context of language, culture, and tradition of law, Quebec was unique. However, it was felt that if the word "unique" was to be used, it be clearly defined in today's context so that it could not be redefined or reinterpreted by lawyers or judges in the future as a means of granting Quebec special powers.

With reference to the role of the government of Quebec and their desire to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society within Canada, there were general concerns. It was felt that it was their role, as it is the role of other provinces and territories, to protect and develop each their own unique character within Canada.

The question was: in what way is Quebec restricted to keeping its uniqueness within the confines of Canada? Opinion was that the uniqueness of Quebec was no greater than the uniqueness of any other province in Canada. As in a family of 12 children, each child is unique in their own way, but a mother loves them all equally.

Mr. Speaker, other issues affecting unity were also expressed, such as interprovincial trade barriers. Trading between countries throughout the world was felt to be more accommodating than trading between provinces. The barriers that the provinces have established on their borders must be eliminated. Provinces must exercise co-operation in developing partnerships in the areas of education, health, and social programs. In other words, all

Canadians should have access to quality services throughout Canada. Many people often find themselves in a position to relocate within Canada, and just as often the levels of services provided by the government and the qualifications for employment may vary from province to province. Access to quality services throughout Canada would not only allow greater mobility between provinces but promote travel within the country.

Mr. Speaker, with very few exceptions the sentiments expressed by the constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake were for a united Canada, which includes the province of Quebec. The saying "United we rise, divided we fall" was quoted several times. However, many indicated that they were not prepared to keep Quebec at any price. Many were frustrated that this Quebec separation issue has hijacked the more important agendas of health, social, educational, and environmental issues that government could provide to its citizens in making Canada a better place to live.

Je vous adresse ces quelques mots en français car c'est la meilleure façon à dire que je suis fier de représenter une circonscription avec une importante et dynamique communauté francophone; je suis fier d'être Franco-Albertain de troisième génération; je suis fier de mes enfants qui parlent couramment les deux langues officielles du Canada; et, je suis particulièrement fier d'être membre d'un gouvernement qui m'encourage à adresser cette Chambre dans ma langue maternelle.

L'Alberta a une longue et glorieuse association avec les Francophones à partir des coureurs de bois, des colonisateurs de tous les coins de notre belle province, des commerçants et bien d'autres citoyens qui ont contribué et qui continuent à participer à tous les secteurs de l'économie depuis plus de 200 ans. Aujourd'hui, les Francophones ont leur place en Alberta grâce à des institutions comme les 17 écoles francophones, la Faculté Saint-Jean, et très récemment, l'ouverture de la Cité des Rocheuses à Calgary et la Cité Francophone à Edmonton.

Comme moi, la grande communauté Franco-Albertaine déclare avec conviction et ardeur à tous nos amis du Québec, "Mon Canada inclut le Québec."

[Translation] I take this opportunity to address a few words in French as it is my way of saying that I am proud to represent a riding with an important and dynamic Francophone community. I am proud of being a third generation Franco-Albertan, I am proud that my children fluently speak both Canada's official languages, and I am particularly proud to be a member of a government that encourages me to address this Chamber in my mother tongue.

Alberta has had a long and glorious association with Francophones beginning with les coureurs de bois, the settlers who homesteaded in every corner of the province, the merchants and all others representing every sector of our vibrant economy for over 200 years. Today Francophones have forged their place in Alberta thanks to their numerous institutions like the 17 Francophone schools, Faculté St. Jean and, more recently, the opening of La Cité des Rocheuses in Calgary and La Cité Francophone in Edmonton.

Like me, the entire Francophone community declares with conviction and ardor to all of our friends in Quebec, "My Canada includes Quebec." [as submitted]

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to share with you the thoughts of a grade 7 student from Glendon school, Melonie Witwicky. I was touched by the emotion expressed through her words and symbols. What I mean by this is that for every "i" that needed to be dotted, she utilized the symbol of a heart, which truly

emphasized her love and understanding of a united Canada. She wrote:

What being Canadian means to me. It means to be free and to have equal rights. I love being a Canadian. I am proud of it and not ashamed to be.

I would now like to table the Dialogue on Unity questionnaires submitted on behalf of the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituents.

THE SPEAKER: At this point in time the Chair would be recognizing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, hon. members, is in the Grey Nuns hospital here in Edmonton. I had an opportunity to speak to him earlier this week, and regretfully he indicated that he probably will be in hospital for upwards of two months, including the Christmas period. So I would invite hon. members to either convey their best wishes to the hon. member or to call him – he has a telephone in his room – or to take the opportunity to visit him.

I would also ask for unanimous consent of the House to recognize an hon. member who has already spoken to table some responses on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I would ask for that unanimous consent in recognizing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. Could we have unanimous consent?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the House. It's indeed a pleasure to serve for at least one moment on behalf of my very good friend of some 30 years and a colleague for some five years here and three years in another forum and to present on his behalf from the citizens of Edmonton-Rutherford some 342 responses and table them in this House and express to you that had he been here, he would express his love for this great nation. His nation stands with Quebec and not divided. He also expressed that some 78 percent of those that filed the reports here and others agree with that statement. So stands his filings today, sir.

7:30

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for children's services.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am indeed honoured to speak today about a very important topic, my Canada, with the guidance I have received from the people of Lesser Slave Lake.

First, I'd like to thank the first ministers for dealing with this issue before it becomes a crisis. Secondly, I'd like to thank Premier Klein for his support and openness to hold public forums for us Albertans to decide our future as Canadians. It takes true leadership to be proactive rather than reactive. On this note I'd like to commend all three party leaders – the Premier, Grant Mitchell, and Pam Barrett – for their vision to work together for something as important as this: unity in Canada.

Our consultations in Lesser Slave Lake occurred in a variety of ways in conjunction with the questionnaire. We used newspapers. The *Lakeside Leader* did an exemplary job. We used radio stations – and they were excellent – contact with schools and a local college to encourage involvement and community forums in

three locations: Slave Lake, Grouard, and High Prairie.

The unity forums used a different approach, Mr. Speaker. I asked the municipalities to be involved and to plan a process for us to use so we could receive as much input as possible. They responded, and instead of debates they wanted to hold what they called a listening forum, something different, for elected individuals such as mayors, reeves, Métis and First Nations leaders, the MP, and of course myself, the MLA, and a Senator. We were very lucky.

At this time I'd like to thank Mayor Gerry Allarie from the town of Slave Lake for his total involvement. I'd also like to thank the Slave Lake chamber of commerce for their support but more specifically the president, Ken Giblin. AVC Lesser Slave Lake also deserves thanks for all the taping done at these forums and of course my staff who worked very hard to help organize and tabulate the information.

Another individual who played a pivotal part during our listening forums was the late Chief Senator Walter Twinn. He brought some very important perspectives to the process, not only as a Conservative Senator but also as First Nations chief. At this time I'd like to thank his family for sharing him with us. We'll sure miss him.

My constituents rose to the challenge the first ministers sent to all Canadians in the Calgary declaration. At this time I'd like to table the 142 responses to the My Canada Is questionnaire from my constituency. I'd also like to table transcripts from the unity talks held in the three locations identified previously where approximately 150 people attended. Unfortunately, I cannot table the phone calls or private chats I was involved in, but I will ensure that the people's views are reflected in the overall comments. I heard from elders, students, leaders from First Nations, Métis people, MDs, towns, chambers of commerce, farmers, fishermen, forestry and oil industries, seniors, businesspeople: generally people from all walks of life and from all ethnic groups.

To summarize their comments, Mr. Speaker, the overall consensus was that the framework was supportable, and over 86 percent agreed to question 1. The elements in the framework that people liked, or question 2 as we refer to it: 83 percent generally supported all the principles.

The reservation was principle 5, and it's that of Quebec being given a distinct role “to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society within Canada.” This the people felt would put Quebec in a different category than the rest of Canadians. A very important point which people weaved throughout everything we heard was equality of status for all people and provinces with all powers being available to everyone.

An element which people felt concern about, or question 3, was that Quebec not be given any special status but that equality must be shared by all Canadians. As well, the territories were not mentioned, and people felt they should be highlighted because they are a part of the national fabric after all.

Elements which should be addressed, or question 4, were as follows: 60 percent indicated that the idea of multiculturalism was an issue which continues to elude the national unity, because people, they thought, must be part of their ethnic origin before they consider themselves as Canadians. On the other hand – I can't forget this also – 40 percent didn't feel there were any other elements which needed to be addressed.

In reference to question 5, over 70 percent gave strong indication that they concur that Albertans' interests are reflected. An interesting component was that 8 percent were uncertain.

At this time I'd like to talk about a group which spoke elo-

quently about their Canada or, in Cree, Kanata, which means clean country. First Nations and Métis people have indicated they have outstanding issues which need to be addressed. Anything we are willing to do for Quebec we must also do for First Nations. Concerns which have been expressed are that treaty and self-government are still outstanding issues. First Nations people want to be at the table during any talks which affect their lives and want to have input into their future and the future of their people.

Métis people were directly involved in our forums and spoke passionately about that involvement. They indicated their disappointment in not being involved at the first ministers' level of unity talks. A few constituents brought the dilemma of aboriginals' views to light. Treaty 8 bands are preparing to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the signing of Treaty 8 on June 21, 1999. Mr. Speaker, a hundred years ago. Our province isn't even that old. First Nations felt that they were left out and are worried about their rights. Nonaboriginal people also expressed that we need to resolve the outstanding commitments to First Nations because it affects us all in one way or another.

Generally speaking, the majority of my constituents were very happy to have had a say in what they see as their Canada and their role in this vision. To quote a constituent:

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 co-operatively and with flexibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation.

Mr. Speaker, up to 91 percent of constituents had positive opinions about being Canadian. I'd like to share a few of those comments on this question. An aboriginal lady answered the question with: "I'm proud to be a Canadian. I was born Canadian and it's the best country there is to live."

Canada is a great country and should not be broken apart. All provinces should have the same status in Canada. All citizens in Canada have to have the same rights, no exceptions.

Although this is not just about Quebec, I want them an equal partner in Canada.

We live in the greatest country in the world.

And a single word which I think stands tall, "Proud."

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canadian, eh? What does it mean to be Canadian? The rest of the world seems to find it easier to define Canadian for us, mostly in glowing terms, than we are able to define it for ourselves. Why are we so reticent about developing and speaking our definition of our country and what it means to be Canadian? The Canada I know includes Quebec. Without Quebec Canada in its fullness ceases to exist.

The first time I visited Quebec was in 1967 when the World's Fair, Man and His World, was held in Montreal. The decision to go on my part was not a well-planned one. It was October by the time my work allowed me to get away, and the World's Fair had only two weeks left to run. I just bought a plane fare and went. I arrived in Montreal at 2:30 in the morning. As I searched for a hotel room, I realized most signs were in French, most people spoke French, and so it was that I realized that what I was taught in school was correct: in Quebec most people are French.

As I considered my situation, alone in unfamiliar circumstances within my own country, a thought occurred to me: this, too, is Canada and was Canada for about 200 years before the part of the world I came from became known as Canada.

7:40

You know, for me it is okay to be different and be Canadian. Sometimes when I have attended or participated in a Remembrance Day service, I have with compassion observed the pain and agony in the faces of veterans caused by events that occurred some 50 years ago. I have come to recognize and appreciate the price they have paid to keep for us our country and to keep us free. For us to be complacent about a threat to our country from within is just not right.

I saw one of the most graphic depictions of our situation in Canada displayed as an ice sculpture of a 12-point maple leaf, one point of which was broken off and a fellow in a parka trying to hold it from falling.

Despite our diverse history and the significant differences within our country we are a country that is the envy of most of the world. As Canadians we work hard and we have freedom. We work hard and we have opportunity. We work hard and we have prosperity.

To those who would say, "Let Quebec go," I ask you to think long and hard about the consequences of such an occurrence. Partitioned countries seldom, if ever, work well. What is left of Canada, whatever we may call it after Quebec separation, would be dependent upon Quebec for transportation and communication. Hardly the ideal.

The European countries, from which many of us originate, despite centuries of conflict amongst them, recognize the benefits of joining together and working toward that goal. Why are we heading for separation? We need the strength of unity to be competitive in a global market.

The odds of a peaceful, negotiated separation are not that good. Do we really want to repeat for ourselves the painful history of our southern neighbours? That is a very real possibility when you see how extremists now conduct themselves. It is much better for us to have people of honour and goodwill pursue a commitment to unity through a process like the Calgary declaration.

We are taking the first real steps toward renewal. If we do not renew ourselves from within in a constructive way, other forces will give us an adjustment from which we may never recover. We need to spend time sorting out the terms of Confederation. Are the constitutional divisions of powers being respected? Are Canadians equal? Have the original commitments agreed to at the time of Confederation been honoured? Did the original terms of Confederation agree that Quebec could remain French in language, culture, and civil law? If so, what is the issue with recognizing this to be so now with words like "distinct" or "unique"?

I would like to take a moment to table 381 unity responses from people in the Leduc constituency. At the recent annual Leduc-Nisku business mixer we set up a unity booth where we had the opportunity to have exposure to about 2,000 people. Many constituents spoke to us about the unity debate. Seventy-five percent of respondents from the Leduc constituency support the Calgary declaration in whole or in part; 25 percent were either undecided or indicated nonsupport in whole or in part.

I am grateful for the efforts of Premier Ralph Klein and the Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs minister, the Hon. David Hancock, and the other Premiers for the effort they have undertaken to resolve what is most certainly the biggest issue affecting all Canadians at the present time.

God bless Canada. Vive le Canada. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by thanking the constituents of Calgary-Currie for their input and thoughtful consideration of the Calgary declaration and its significance in the future planning for our country and our province. But having said that, let me mention that not everyone in Calgary-Currie supports this initiative. Approximately 10 percent of the 300 submissions I will table later did reject the declaration, but the fact that the support was not unanimous is no surprise. Clause 5 and the implications of special status are not clear, and the costs, legalities and definitions are also not clarified at this time for the constituency.

Mr. Speaker, another aspect is that national unity is not a priority within the community of Calgary-Currie. At a time when more emergent issues such as education appear to be set aside, I would be remiss as the member for this constituency not to acknowledge the specific correspondence and petitions directly related to the Calgary declaration and the educational issues on behalf of my constituents. I would like to acknowledge that clearly a balance must be struck between the dialogue on the political future of Canada and a vision for that future, the education of our children.

Mr. Speaker, another concern seems to be the inability of politicians at the federal and provincial levels to bring this issue to a conclusion. I would acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of our Premier, all provincial leaders, and the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs for this declaration. However, it behooves all of us as elected officials to realize the level of frustration amongst Albertans and, I would suggest, Canadians at this ongoing debate.

Having said that, I would like to share some of the points that were raised by my constituents, some that may not have been addressed so far, and ask you to give them some consideration at this time. They are random, but they reflect a broad range of responses.

One of the big concerns was the distinction between the views of the separatist members of the National Assembly in Quebec led by M. Bouchard and the average Quebecker. Are we responding to the people of Quebec or the agenda of a select few fixed on the destruction of Canada? Both adults and students hoped that we could improve our educational programs and lead to a better understanding of our history as a nation and our responsibility as citizens to that history.

Mr. Speaker, there is confusion about the term "federal authority," and as we move to developing a more flexible federalism as outlined in clause 7, a clear definition of provincial and federal roles and responsibilities must be articulated. Canadians share a commitment to the recognition of aboriginals at the table in any future constitutional discussions, and many mentioned the fact that their environment, a healthy and safe environment, was an important characteristic of their Canada. They wanted us to use more proactive language, focusing on discussions around an indivisible Canada rather than the need to keep the country together, and in fact what is good for Canada is good for Alberta, and use that terminology, not the reverse, as most provincial leaders would have us believe.

Others reflect that this country is paramount in the world, worth fighting and dying for. Many of my constituents are members of the armed forces. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, a few ask that we would pray for our country and ask the Lord's guidance in keeping Canada whole.

In February 1996 CP Rail invited me to present an overview of our educational opportunities to their employees in Toronto,

Montreal, and Vancouver in anticipation of their relocation. I use this as an example because the sensitivity of our unity issues is of paramount concern within our national community as it affects families, businesses, and careers across this nation.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about a town hall meeting I held. I'm not sure that you're aware that we have a very large Francophone centre that has been recently opened in our community, and we held a town hall meeting at the Cité des Rocheuses in Calgary on November 7. Members of the Francophone community have prepared a statement for me reflecting their issues with respect to the Calgary declaration. I don't know if you would know that west of Ontario, Alberta is the province with the largest Francophone population, and this community is special to me as I represented it as the chairman of the Alberta School Boards' bilingual association and also served on a task force dealing with Francophone governance with respect to the setting up of our Francophone school boards. The issues that they reflect are consistent with other constituents, and as they draw on a very large membership, I think it's important that we as members of this House pay significant attention to their comments. I have provided the translation for you.

7:50

Nous les membres de la communauté francophone de Calgary croyons que la force et les avantages historiques de la diversité du Canada, qui sont présents dans tous les provinces et territoires, sont fondés sur les peuples et les cultures autochtones et sur l'égalité des communautés des langues française et anglaise, chacune enrichie par des citoyens de différentes cultures provenant de partout au monde.

Si nous voulons que le Canada demeure fort et uni, nous croyons que tous les paliers des gouvernements fédéral, provinciaux, et municipaux réglant tous les aspects du Canada doivent travailler activement ensemble pour protéger et développer les cultures autochtones, francophones, et anglophones en respectant l'esprit et l'intention qui était à l'origine de l'identité du partenariat entre Francophones et Anglophones.

L'histoire et les valeurs du Canada ont fait un pays qui est l'envi du monde entier. Continuons à bâtir ensemble.

Merci.

[Translation] We, the members of Calgary's Francophone community, believe that Canada's strength and historical advantage of diversity, present in all provinces and territories, are founded on aboriginal peoples and cultures and the equality of the French and English language communities, each enriched by a multicultural citizenry drawn from all parts of the world.

If Canada is to remain strong and united, we believe that all levels of government, federal, provincial, and municipal, governing all aspects of Canada, must work actively together to protect and develop Canada's aboriginal, Francophone, and Anglophone cultures, respecting the spirit and intent of Canada's original French-speaking and English-speaking partnership and identity.

Canada's history and values have led it to be the envy of the world. Let us continue building together. [as submitted]

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to table close to 300 submissions from the residents of Calgary-Currie. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin tonight by repeating a member's statement that I made in this Assembly on October 31, 1995. This was the day after the

referendum in Quebec on separation. I have made some translation available to all members of the House.

M. le Président de l'Assemblée, le Canada, c'est mon pays; c'est ma patrie. Il s'étend d'une mer à l'autre, avec ses belles montagnes et ses beaux lacs, with its beautiful forests and wonderful prairies, avec le grand nord et ses océans. Mais mon pays, c'est encore plus. It is its people, son peuple, all those who live within its boundaries, the two founding nations and all the immigrants who came from all over the world. It has a colourful history. It is the best country in the world, the greatest country. Let us all commit ourselves to preserving it.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, Canada is my country; it is my homeland. It stretches from sea to sea, with its majestic mountains and serene lakes, with its beautiful forests and wonderful prairies, with the vast north and its oceans. But my country is much more than this. It is its people, all those who live within its boundaries . . . [as submitted]

The Canadian federation was formed in the years leading up to 1867. A Constitution was adopted, and it served us well for many, many years. Le pays s'est agrandi et s'est épanoui. We celebrated our centennial with pride, avec honneur et dignité, avec joie et fierté, fier d'être Canadien, proud to be Albertans, fier d'être Québécois et Québécoises. But during the last 30 years or so discontent set in. Le Québec demandait d'être reconnu comme peuple distinct. L'Alberta était très offensée par le fameux NEP, the national energy program, and most Canadians were totally opposed to the GST. All provinces are still having areas of concern.

[Translation] The country expanded and flourished. We celebrated our centennial with pride, with honour and dignity, with joy and pride, proud to be Canadian, proud to be Albertans, proud to be Québécois and Québécoises. But during the last 30 years or so, discontent set in. Quebec asked to be recognized as a distinct society. Alberta was very disgruntled by the renowned NEP (National Energy Program) and most Canadians were totally opposed to the GST . . . [as submitted]

The federal system is no longer working [for us]. Three attempts were made to resolve the differences and address the concerns: first, the patriation of the Constitution in 1982, then Meech Lake, and the Charlottetown accord. All attempts failed miserably. They failed because the feds had a vested interest in protecting their central power. Hier le peuple de la Belle Province a voté pour rester avec nous, mais c'est clair qu'il faut un changement. Le message est fort. Let us try a new avenue and ask the feds to step aside this time. We should say: "Please, do not phone us; we will call you." I am convinced that the provinces and the territories can negotiate a new deal, like they did in 1867, without the presence of the feds. With a renewed federalism, decentralization of power, and recognition of the provinces, we would be on the road to success again.

[Translation] Yesterday people from la Belle Province voted to remain with us, but it is clear a change is needed. The message is strong. . . [as submitted]

Vive le Canada. Vive les Canadiens et les Canadiennes. Vive le plus beau pays du monde. Vive la différence.

[Translation] Long live Canada. Long live Canadians. Long live the most beautiful country in the world. Let's accept our differences. [as submitted]

Mr. Speaker, today I believe as strongly as I did two years ago that Canada is the best country in the world. We have a jewel in our hands, and too many Canadians are complacent and do not take the time to appreciate what we have. We have the best country, and the proof is that five years out of the last six the United Nations named Canada as the best country in the world to live, the safest country in the world to live. It's a land where you have freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly. The proof is also that people

came from all over the world as immigrants to Canada. We're viewed as the best country by all nations. There are many nations who would be very, very happy to have a country equal to ours. We have to do something to preserve this land.

It did not come easy. It did not happen overnight. If we look back to our history, in 1604 the first colony was established in Nova Scotia. Four years later was the founding of Quebec City. From this very modest and humble start it expanded, and a nation came about. Regardless of who the host nation was in Europe for the colony, the colony prospered. It grew and expanded.

We had so much success in this land that in 1867 there was an agreement made by four colonies, and this agreement was a good understanding of equal stature for all colonies that joined the union. They called this nation Canada. They drafted a Constitution, and they made provision to recognize that Quebec had special needs. Those needs were the culture, the language, the code of law. They recognized that that was there, and it was accommodated in the Constitution. This Constitution was in place – and still is with some modification – when we repatriated the Constitution, but it served us well for all those years.

The problem came about in the last 25 or 30 years when some people with nationalistic views in Quebec decided that it would be an ideal of theirs to form their own nation and started to spread this vision. They had very few followers then, but they were able to convince some. They were able to impress others. They were able to confuse many, and they were able to infiltrate themselves in the election process and became elected as a government with a separatist point of view. They held two referendums where they were able to have questions that were somewhat misleading and vague and not to the point, so in the last referendum they came very, very close to winning the referendum, not because the people of Quebec really wanted separation but because many of them did not understand the question.

So what we have to do is make sure that we as the other provinces send a strong message to Quebec that we want them in our country, that we want Canada to remain united as it is today. We have to make a strong expression of our wish for them to stay. We have to make sure in the future that if there is any other referendum, the question will be clear and the people will really vote yes or no on separation. I think that if that is put forward, there is no doubt in my mind what the outcome will be.

I had in my constituency roughly 300 people who answered the questionnaire, and I would like to table that at this time. Of the people who did, about 82 percent supported the Calgary accord, some with reservation, some very strongly, and some with conditions. The concerns were with item 5 in our questionnaire. The people feel that we have to do all we can to keep Quebec in Canada, that we have to work for unity, but they are not prepared to give special status to the province of Quebec. I am of the same view.

I think that we can do like we did in 1867. Provisions can be accommodated to recognize their culture, language, and the code of law that they have, but we don't have to go to the process of saying that this is a distinct society or a unique society. The people in my constituency are concerned that eventually the courts of this land could make an interpretation for this to mean something else, and it could evolve into special status. I think that's the biggest fear that I can see in my constituency in regards to the Calgary accord. I think that we can work this thing out.

I had a few people with reservations that were totally opposed to the accord. They are a very small minority. Some of them probably didn't take time or don't understand the bigger picture

of a nation. I hope that with time they will come around and will understand the whole need to keep our country together.

8:00

I would also like to mention that I'm very proud to be a Canadian. I'm a Canadian first. I'm proud to be an Albertan, but I'm an Albertan second. The first ancestor in my family came to Quebec City in 1608 with Champlain, when they founded the city. He was on the same boat on that trip, and he was his right hand-man. That is just to express to you my connection, but we have the family tree and I can prove that to you. I have here one of the Fathers of Confederation, which is Sir Hector-Louis Langevin. He was one of the Fathers of Confederation in 1867. He's also in our family tree. The reason I'm bringing this out is to prove that in those years, in 1867, there was accommodation between English Canada and French Canada to make sure that when they united the two colonies, the people took part in the government on equal status. This fellow here was the postmaster. He was a solicitor general. He held a total of five posts in the PC government of Sir John A. Macdonald. We can see that in those days you could have roots in the two founding nations – it didn't matter which one – and you could work in the same government, in the same party on equal status. I think that's still possible today, and we can still respect that.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to mention a couple of comments from people in my constituency. One said: I feel strong about my Canada as my country; I feel I belong, I am connected, I am rooted to the land, and I love all the people.

The second comment is that to be a Canadian is to be the freest, the most educated, the wealthiest person on the planet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci beaucoup, M. le Président de la Chambre.

THE SPEAKER: Wow. So the family came over in 1608, did it? That's impressive. That's impressive.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, first the congratulations. I'd like to congratulate the three leaders for bringing about this process, and also congratulations to all the people of Alberta who took the time to participate by either using the Net or by writing in on the forms that were provided.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

Four hundred and forty-five residents of my constituency of Lethbridge-West responded, so here are the statistics. Basically a positive response to the dialogue in front of them by 381, which represents an 85.6 percent response rate. "No": there were 45, which equals 10.1 percent. "Don't know" or "no opinion" was 19, or only 4.3 percent. I would like to now table these 445 responses from Lethbridge-West.

Some logistics. While I did have one town hall meeting, I felt it was more important to visit schools, because what we are going to be deciding in 1997 and the next few years these young people are actually going to have to live with. So I felt it was important that we get some feedback from them. I visited the Lethbridge Collegiate Institute, the Catholic Central high school, Westminster school, and also a social class at Emmanuel Christian.

The comments that our people from Lethbridge-West have made are basically the same that have already been expressed, and I will not, then, go into that any further. What I'd like to do though,

Madam Speaker, is just focus for a minute on element 7 and indicate how, in my view, this is a very important element and something that will need discussion. I'd like to use a practical example of why Alberta and Quebec in my opinion can exist within this federal system that we have and why it is so important that they remain.

As we know, element 7 talks about a federal system where provincial and territorial governments work in partnership while respecting each other's jurisdiction. If we were to set up a continuum of where zero was total federal control and on the other end of that continuum 10 was separation, then I would say that Alberta would not go that far within this federalist system that we have, and of course we're here hoping that Quebec won't go that far either. But I would suggest to all the members of this Assembly that we would go along that continuum with Quebec, because I believe that many of those issues that Quebec citizens talk about and are concerned about we here in Alberta would share.

And how would that work in the political system? Let me give you this particular example. In September of this year the Minister of Education and myself attended the conference of education ministers for Canada in Saskatoon. We had a number of occasions to go in camera, where we then, as the so-called political leaders for the education system within our country, had the opportunity to discuss some very real matters without media being there, of course, and without any of the civil servants that serve us so well. There were times when representatives from other regions wanted to bring forth their concerns, and what they could see as a resolution to this was some sort of federal over-arching type of control or direction or administration. I'm very proud to say that my colleague the Minister of Education and myself spoke very, very strongly against such a concept because we feel it's very important that Alberta continue to administer those constitutional powers that it has. Time after time after time when we looked around the room to find out where the best support was, it was from the hon. member from Quebec.

So I want to use some of my time today to bring that to the attention of all the members of this Legislature: that if we could find a way in which to convince the politicians and, yes, the citizens of Quebec to stop short on that continuum, then I think you would find that in the federal system Alberta and Quebec could continue to be strong allies as we face that constant and that almost all-encompassing power that Ottawa generates and that certainly is generated out of the province of Ontario.

The last point I would want to make today. I have the benefit of hindsight. I'm not sure that I could have made this speech in 1996, but I can in '97. In 1993 the people of Canada elected an opposition party whose sole intent was to separate from Canada. That was their prime motivation. They had a tremendous platform on which to try to gain that motivation. What actually happened is that in 1997 the people of Canada go back to the polls and that particular party, the Bloc Québécois, is no longer the opposition party in this country. What other country in the world would have allowed such a procedure to go on? In any other country in the world we would have had young men and young women – we would have been arming them with firearms, and they would have been shooting at each other. So I think in hindsight the election in 1993 is a cause célèbre, that it's something that needs to be celebrated: that this country, this Canada, would find itself in a position where it could talk and it could negotiate and it could compromise, and it can work things out. We are a tremendous model for the rest of the world, and we will

continue to be that tremendous model so long as we have Quebec as part of our federal system.

There have been 58 speakers before me. I feel somewhat humble in the fact that I'm only unilingual. We have had expressions today and yesterday from people who are bilingual, trilingual. Our friend from Calgary-Fort is quatre-lingual, if that's a proper phrase. So I hope you would indulge me if I just try to finish off my little portion of today's events with trying to say something in French. I would say: *vive le Québec; vive le Canada avec Québec.*

Bonsoir, Madame la Présidente.

8:10

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on the subject of my Canada. I want to use this opportunity to share with you the views of my constituents on this serious matter. To begin, I must say the response in my constituency was tremendous. I would like to thank all of those who took the time to respond, as it is their democratic right to express their opinions, and it's our democratic responsibility as elected representatives to listen.

It became very obvious to me as I read through the 321 questionnaires, Madam Speaker, that many of the respondents in my constituency agree fully with the notions of equality set forth in the framework. This includes both equality of provinces and particularly equality of individual Canadians. Equality is something which is clearly important to Albertans, as Alberta has a long history of promoting the principles of equality and freedom and of protecting those principles with the rule of law.

In general, reaction to the framework for discussion on national unity was mostly positive. Many of my constituents support the framework, though some have concerns with certain elements. Those elements, Madam Speaker, include number 5, which recognizes the unique character of Quebec society. Although there is currently no intent to re-open constitutional negotiations, it is clear that some Albertans have not forgotten Meech Lake and the Charlottetown accord, and there is concern that this framework is simply leading us into further constitutional negotiation problems.

For instance, Madam Speaker, one of my constituents remarks:

Do you really want to get into this kind of complex division of people? We're all Canadians. I don't want Quebec to leave Canada. However, it's a two way street and compromise should be on both sides.

With respect to the framework, this quote reflects a common sentiment on element 5, which recognizes that Quebec society's unique character may contradict elements 2 and 6, which promote equality of status and powers for all 10 provinces. There is also fear that the current separatist government in Quebec is not interested in national unity at all.

A resident writes:

As long as Premier Bouchard and the Parti Québécois are in power in Quebec, they will not accept this framework and have already said as much. Their goal is a separate Quebec, and they are not prepared to discuss any other options.

Another constituent put it this way: "Are we wasting our time?"

Another prevalent concern is the fate of English in Quebec and of French outside Quebec. A resident reminds us that French and English are our heritage, that Quebec is not the only place in Canada that has a French heritage; French is a part of every province and many communities.

Despite some of these concerns, Madam Speaker, many respondents support the framework. They understand the importance of national unity and the implications of a potential breakup of the Canadian federation. Although the struggle for Canadian unity has been a protracted struggle, Albertans are proud Canadians, and they are ready to do what is necessary to ensure the future of our great country.

For example, a couple from my community maintain that "Quebec does have a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society." Another resident reminds us that "the protection required for the French society is simply not parallel to the English, which is not a threatened culture in North America." These Albertans sympathize with the Quebec situation. They realize that for the other nine provinces to formally recognize the unique character of Quebec society is an important step towards achieving national unity. For many Quebecers, this is all they're asking from the rest of Canada: no special powers, rights, or privileges; simply recognition. This, Madam Speaker, is what the Calgary declaration offers.

There is a great appreciation in my constituency for the severe consequences that would ensue if Quebec were to leave Canada. A constituent warns that "if we start to break up, we will lose our identity . . . I don't see any one province being able to exist on its own." Another submits an impassioned statement: "The loss of any part of Canada, however small or large, erases Canada. It then becomes a much lesser country – a stranger to me."

These Albertans, like so many other Albertans, are proud Canadians who realize the importance of national unity and the dire consequences of disintegration. It is our federal structure, Madam Speaker, which makes our country great. As historian Alexander Brady once said, "Federalism is the most distinctive achievement of Canadian democracy." It is the partnership between 10 provinces which defines Canada. With strong, united provinces we have a strong, united Canada.

Madam Speaker, this is a critical point in Canada's history. The government of Alberta in co-operation with eight other provincial and two territorial governments is taking a proactive role in pursuit of national unity. The framework for discussion on national unity gave Canadians an opportunity to share their views of Canada. Thousands of Albertans used this opportunity to recommend not only ways to preserve the Canadian federation but also ways to improve it. Clearly, national unity is an issue of tremendous importance to Albertans and indeed to all Canadians.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would like to share with you and the Assembly the passionate feeling of a constituent who proclaims:

We are all special people here in Canada . . . Let us remain that way! Unity, accompanied by understanding, must come first and foremost. I am proud to call myself a Canadian. Thank you, Canada, for taking me into your fold.

Madam Speaker, we are so fortunate by living in Canada. I thank you for this opportunity.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

MR. PHAM: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour and privilege to join the debate on national unity based on the framework provided at the Premiers' conference in Calgary last September. Let me begin by thanking all the constituents of Calgary-Montrose who took the time to complete the questionnaire, to phone my office, and to attend the three open houses that we had on this issue. Their input and feedback are extremely important and truly appreciated.

At this time I would like to table the 195 questionnaires that my office has received to date from the constituents of Calgary-Montrose.

Madam Speaker, I can still recall the night in October of 1995 when Quebec had the referendum to decide whether or not Quebec should remain as part of Canada. Earlier that evening the Member for Barrhead-Westlock, who is now the Speaker, and I went out for dinner, and we spent most of the dinner discussing Quebec and predicting the outcome of the referendum. With his wisdom, he predicted a very close win for the federalists in Quebec, and as a greenhorn politician I did not agree with him. I always thought that the federalists in Quebec would win with a strong margin. Later on that night like most Canadians I was glued to my TV set watching the results of the referendum. As the numbers rolled in I was horrified to face the real possibility of losing our country. After two hours of waiting anxiously for the final result, I was so thankful that we still had a country.

To me and many Canadians it was like a near-death experience. I promised myself that night that I would do whatever it took to prevent that kind of close call from ever happening again. And, Madam Speaker, ever since that night I keep asking myself the question: why did so many Quebecers vote yes to break up our country? Most importantly, will they do it again?

8:20

The answers to these questions became crystal clear to me this fall, when I had the honour to represent Alberta at the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas in Quebec and to represent Canada at the Francophonie summit in Vietnam. At both of these functions I witnessed at close range how the separatist forces in Quebec operate. They use every trick – and I do mean every trick – to advance their cause. As a prominent Quebecer has observed, the number of hard-core separatists in Quebec has not increased over the last 10 years. They, however, are very well organized. They also have a very popular leader. Mr. Lucien Bouchard is as popular in Quebec as our Premier, Ralph Klein, is in Alberta. Mr. Bouchard is an expert in playing the victim role and no doubt is the most effective weapon that the separatists have.

Quebeckers are told that they are being pushed around by English-speaking Canadians, that their identity and culture are being threatened, and that they are not wanted in Canada. They are also assured that a yes vote to separation will not mean an end to all the privileges they enjoy as Canadians. It simply means they have additional power to protect their culture and identity. At the same time the PQ government tries to convince the rest of Canada that Quebec wants to separate and that no matter what we do, Quebec will still go its own way. With this two-pronged approach the PQ were able to fool many Canadians both inside and outside of Quebec.

Madam Speaker, I have always believed and will continue to believe that when presented with the true facts and given the choice between being citizens of the number one country in the world or being citizens of an unknown, untested regime, most Canadians except for a few hard-core separatists will make the right choice. That's why I and most of my constituents support the Calgary framework for national unity. This framework will remind all Canadians what it means to be Canadian and how wonderful our country really is.

For those constituents of Calgary-Montrose who did not support the Calgary framework and expressed skepticism towards this process, I certainly understand the feeling. Who can blame their frustration after so many failed constitutional talks?

By supporting this declaration, I do not expect our problem or the separatists will go away, but by doing so, I will add my voice to the collective voice of all Canadians from sea to sea to sea to express our determination to keep our country united, strong, and free.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. THURBER: I want to start my remarks by tabling the 245 written responses that we had from the Drayton Valley-Calmar constituency. I also speak here tonight, Madam Speaker, with a little bit of trepidation, because while the vast majority of my constituents are very much in favour of Canada staying together and Quebec being part of that, they differ somewhat in opinion as to how they get there, and I want to deal with a little bit of that. There's a whole lot of other opinions that came out of this whole process, and I respect them very much, so I do want to deal with them a little bit.

Everybody has agreed that Quebec is very much a part of the multicultural and multilingual makeup that makes this country so great and that makes it so respected worldwide. I know that you yourself and other members here and constituents of mine have traveled worldwide, and the first thing they do is put a Canada flag on the back of their T-shirt because they know that it doesn't matter where you go in this world, you will be respected as a Canadian. I think that's a very good point, and I think it's something all of us should remember.

I served in the Canadian Armed Forces some 40 years ago basically, a little better than that in fact, and even at that time Canadians were respected. It didn't matter where you lit in this world. It's still the truth. We're respected more than the Americans; we're respected more than the Europeans and the Brits and all the rest of them. I think that's important to remember. But it's there because of the unique makeup of Canada, not the unique makeup of Quebec. The unique makeup of Canada.

A lot of my constituents have a problem when we talk about taking one portion of this country and calling it unique or distinct or anything different from the rest. I can take you through my own constituency of Drayton Valley-Calmar and I can show you some very unique individuals – you may chuckle at that, Madam Speaker, but you know that that's true – as you can in your own. They believe in equal status, totally equal status for everybody in Canada. There have been some things done in the Constitution that gave the aboriginals some special rights, and everybody agrees with those. They were put there for a reason. But as far as anybody else in Canada being unique or different, we're all unique and different or none of us are unique or different.

There's a problem that's come about because of this divisiveness in Canada, because of the projected referendums after referendums and things like that. It hurts the country as a whole. It hurts Alberta. It hurts Canada as a whole because it gets away from the continuity of the government of the society of Canada that we have, and I think we have to recognize that. My constituents are saying: somehow you have to make this stop. You can't have a vote every two years on separation, because this affects everybody. It affects everybody in Canada, but it really affects those people in Quebec.

If you look at before the last referendum and the referendum before that, you saw businesses and things moving out of Quebec and trying to move away from that because there was an uncertainty there. Somehow as a country we have to remove that uncertainty and get the stability back there. We're very fortunate in Alberta, being part of Canada, that we've been able to establish

that certainty and that stability, but if that instability stays with the whole country, it's going to cause all of us problems.

Now, my constituents have said to me: if there's no chance of us remaining as one country and Quebec wants to separate and is going to separate, then somewhere along the line we have to lay down the rules. The Minister of Justice referred to it a little bit earlier in his talk. I think the rules should be laid down before the vote is taken, before the referendum is taken. If you want to secede from Canada, if you want to become a separate country, well, let's talk about the pension plans, let's talk about the dollar, let's talk about passports, and let's talk about what it's going to cost, not only what it's going to cost Quebec, what it's going to cost us. Let's lay the rules out there so that if you do decide to secede from this country, you know what it's going to cost you and where you're going to be.

You can't be halfway pregnant. You are either pregnant or you're not. You can't halfway secede and halfway not secede. So my constituents have told me many, many times: "You've got to lay down the rules. Somebody's got to do it. And you can't have it going on every two years. It's got to be done. It's got to be finished with. Let's get on with life in Canada."

We talk about unique. Some of my constituents have said: look in the dictionary and talk about unique. I looked in the *Oxford* dictionary here not too long ago. It says: being the only one of its kind, having no like or equal, or is unusual. I don't think my constituents want to say that Quebec is unique. I don't think they want to say that they're distinct. They're part of Canada, so they're the same as the rest of us. We must continue along those lines and set up the rules very clearly as to what happens if in fact there is separation, but at the same time my constituents have overwhelmingly said: "We want a united Canada. We want Quebec to be part of that Canada. So get on with the job. We're wasting a lot of time talking about unity."

The federal government needs to back up and take a look at its association with the provinces and its association with the people of Canada. Where there's a clear delineation of duties and responsibilities, that has to be considered by the federal government, and maybe we wouldn't have this mess with Quebec right now.

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

8:30

MR. LOUGHEED: Madam Speaker, I rise in this Assembly today to speak to the motion before us. The motion starts with the statement:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be guided by the input received from Albertans during the public consultation process.

I received input from the residents of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan in several different ways. Public meetings were advertised in the local papers and held in Fort Saskatchewan, Ardrossan, South Cooking Lake, and Whitecroft. Students in three high schools were consulted and given the opportunity to discuss the framework. A group of about 30 young adults was invited to a meeting where part of the discussion time involved the elements of the framework. Many conversations with individuals were also part of the consultation process. In addition, I received signed responses from over 330 residents. At this time I would like to table those responses.

Eighty-two percent of the written responses said yes to the question "Overall, do you support the framework?" However, the response to the framework was less positive from those who expressed their opinions in various meetings. Based only on those

statistics, if they were to be considered in isolation, one would decide to support the motion before us and state that the residents of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan concur with the principles embodied in the elements of the Calgary framework. To state that these people who have provided me with input concur with the framework implies that they are in harmony or feel comfortable with the framework. Madam Speaker, about half the people providing input have expressed grave concern about one or more of the elements of the framework. Although the majority of people state that they will accept the framework, these concerns indicate to me that there is work that must be done to improve the framework and diminish the dissonance that for many residents of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan clearly exists.

These concerns centre mainly but not exclusively around item 5. They have been expressed in many different ways and primarily involve a view of Canada that requires that not only one region or people be considered unique. Some statements are as follows. "As far as I'm concerned, all Canadians are equal. We all have unique qualities that should be protected and respected." Another states: "We wonder why we are being told that Quebec is unique. How can all the provinces be equal if Quebec is unequal?" "I believe the federal government has a responsibility to protect and develop the unique character of every province," states another person. Another says, "It is time that we are all treated equal, no special treatment for anybody or group."

Also, Madam Speaker, a great many residents of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan have expressed pride in Canadian citizenship, their love of Canada, and their wish to see Canada remain united. Some statements along those lines are as follows. "As I daily watch and read the world news, I cannot believe how lucky I am that my grandfather settled in Canada." Another states, "To be Canadian means being proud of our great country and hope that Quebec sees this as we do and remains part of Canada." Another states, "A proud and nonhyphenated citizen of a great country with a history of peace and good government and positive contributions to the world." Another as an overseas worker expresses these feelings: "As a Canadian one learns by default when working overseas the regard the rest of the world holds for Canada and Canadians." Another says, "To be Canadian is to be proud of being part of the most beautiful, diverse, and spectacular country in the world."

Madam Speaker, recognizing that constitutional amendments must be approved by Albertans in a referendum, as a representative of the people of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, taking direction from their majority overall support of the framework, I will support the motion but with the concerns previously expressed.

Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and be the 67th speaker to present the views of my constituency. By the time 66 other speakers have had an opportunity to express the vision and the views of their constituents, it's difficult to come up with some different ideas. But I think there are some points that need to be made on behalf of the people of Medicine Hat, and I'm proud to have an opportunity to bring to this Assembly the views and concerns of the people of Medicine Hat.

Madam Speaker, in Medicine Hat we had what I considered at the beginning to be a somewhat disappointing response to the

consultation. We held a public meeting one afternoon and evening at the public library in Medicine Hat. I met with high school students, and we received what I thought was a reasonably small number of responses, but as I listened to the debate over the last couple of days, it was probably one of the higher responses of members in the Assembly. My office received in excess of 500 written responses to the consultation. What I was able to conclude from that was that there are a good number of people who feel very passionately and with a great deal of pride about this country of Canada, but at the same time there is also a good deal of cynicism among the population.

If there's one comment that I probably heard more than any other comment it's: "We have been through this so many times. What's the point in trying one more time?" Yet people have that tremendous pride. They have that tremendous optimism in this country. While on one hand they're saying, "We've done it so many times; it's pointless," they're also saying, "Let's give it one more try; this country is certainly worth one more try." Then they get into the process of looking at the framework that was developed by the Premiers in Calgary, and overwhelmingly, Madam Speaker, the people of Medicine Hat have said: this is a framework that has some possibilities; this is a framework that we feel can make a sound basis for future discussions.

At the same time, Madam Speaker, they also expressed to me concern with certain elements in the framework, and their concern obviously is not unique to Medicine Hat, because I've heard numerous other members express similar concerns throughout the province. The biggest, of course, as we have heard, is with respect to item 5, and that is the concept of a unique society. People feel very strongly that all provinces are equal, all provinces should be equal, all provinces must be equal if we are going to have a future as proud as the past in this country. They're saying that all provinces are unique, that there are areas in this country that are unique in many, many ways.

At the same time they're saying that Quebec is unique. No one can deny that Quebec is unique. It is the only province in the country that has the majority of the population that speaks the French language. They have the history of civil law, and we can go on and on and on. But the people in Medicine Hat are telling me that that's a motherhood statement, that is something that is a given, but that doesn't need to be enshrined; it just has to be acknowledged. The people that spoke to me overwhelmingly said: that's simply a fact; that is not something that needs to be enshrined in law. So they have a good deal of concern with the statement that there is a unique character and unique culture in Quebec, but their concern is: what will that be interpreted as? Will that, then, be interpreted as something special, a special status that is not available to all other provinces? Really, it gets back to the items in the declaration, in the framework that say that all Canadians are equal and all provinces are equal. With that, there is virtual unanimous agreement among the people that I was able to speak with.

8:40

I think the other thing that needs to be mentioned is that along with the reference to unique society, unique culture, there also were, interestingly enough, some concerns raised with items 3 and 4. Item 3, to refresh everyone's memory, talks about equality of opportunity. At one of our public meetings we had a tremendous discussion on that area: what exactly does equality of opportunity mean? If that again is a motherhood statement – and all of us can espouse the fact that Canadians have equal opportunity – that's wonderful. If, on the other hand, that becomes at some point in

time interpreted as something that becomes a right, becomes an entitlement, well, the fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, for various reasons – economic, financial, historical – the equal opportunity is only there for individuals who seize that opportunity. If we are all of a sudden getting into a mind-set that there needs to be absolute equality forced upon people by government on high, the people in Medicine Hat have said: "No. That is not something that we agree with. That is not something that we can abide by. What we agree is that there needs to be the opportunity for those people who are there willing to catch that opportunity." So we had a good long discussion on that particular area.

We also had a good discussion on item 4. Again many people felt that this was very much a motherhood statement. This was a statement of fact, not necessarily a statement that needs to be or perhaps even should be enshrined.

The real message that I got as the MLA for Medicine Hat is that people in southeastern Alberta in my constituency, in particular Medicine Hat, have a deep and sincere passion for this country. They feel very strongly, Madam Speaker, that this country is worth fighting for, but they also feel that in that fight, in preserving what we are so proud of in this country, we have to keep in mind at all cost – paramountcy in the whole debate – the equality of all Canadians and the equality of all provinces.

If the people of Medicine Hat that I spoke to could be here this evening, they would emphasize, probably more than what I have been able to emphasize this evening, the fact that, yes, this is a strong framework; this is a framework that we can build upon. But they would also emphasize the fact that, as in the motion that's under debate, any constitutional changes that are contemplated must be approved through referendum, and if that referendum is brought forward to the people of Alberta, then we as legislators, we as elected representatives who will be asked to contribute to any constitutional talks should also keep in mind the first part of the resolution that's before us tonight and that is: guided by the principles, guided by consultation with Albertans. The Albertans that spoke with me, the people from Medicine Hat that spoke with me clearly indicated that we must be careful that we do not confer any special status on other provinces, on any provinces. Paramountcy in the whole discussion really is the equality of provinces.

With that, Madam Speaker, I think I can honestly say that the people of Medicine Hat feel very strongly that this country is worth the time and the effort, but they also acknowledge that there could well be a great deal of time and effort expended. They wish the best to the Premiers of Canada, and they wish to also express that the Canada that the people of Medicine Hat love so much also includes the people of Quebec.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. DOERKSEN: Madam Speaker, I want to first thank the many people in Red Deer-South constituency, almost 500 individuals, who took the time to write down their thoughts on paper and send them to us for review. I am tabling these documents at this time.

My comments this evening are a reflection of their responses. Whatever their position in response to the Calgary declaration, whether wholehearted support, qualified support, or nonsupport, there was one common underlying theme: they were proud to be Canadian. It is a difficult emotion to describe, but the prospect of Canada at risk does not rest easily in their hearts. There is anger, hostility, and contempt for those political leaders who dare to undermine the very notion of our Canada. There is an

overwhelming weariness that we should have to ever again be in a discussion of what Canada is. Yet they are not willing to give up the identity that we have as Canadians. I believe it is for that reason that over 80 percent of the responses from Red Deer-South constituency have indicated a general support for the Calgary declaration as guiding principles in defining who Canada is.

It is also evident that the support is a qualified support. In the meeting I attended at Parkvale Lodge, a lady asked whether this document was a discussion about Canada or whether it was a discussion about a relationship with Quebec. This is really the crux of the whole unity debate, for if we start debating what our relationship to Quebec is, we have already lost the debate and with it the definition of Canada.

Canada is about equality of status for all provinces. The Red Deer-South respondents made that abundantly clear in identifying the elements of all provinces having equality of status as the statement they liked best in the Calgary declaration. The qualification of support focused largely on element number 5, where the concept of the unique character of Quebec is introduced. It is at this point where we begin to entertain the notion of a relationship with Quebec and, I believe, the reason why so many had reservations on this point. For the most part Albertans recognize and appreciate the cultural attributes that are unique to Quebec, much as they enjoy their own traditions and cultures which are unique to them, but it must not be used as a jump-off point to treat provinces differently.

In their support for this declaration, Red Deer-South constituents are acknowledging that leadership on this issue is very important at this time for the continued wellbeing of Canada. Their message to the Premier and to this Legislature is that the Calgary declaration is to remain a declaration of what it means to be Canadian.

God bless Canada.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to be part of this important event in the history of our province and certainly of our country. The process we are completing with this debate has been a true demonstration of democracy. I would like to commend Premier Klein and the other Premiers and territorial leaders for their approach to the Quebec issue and the creation of this dialogue on unity.

8:50

As we gather in this House to discuss the intent of the Calgary declaration, together with our constituents we are taking giant steps to express to the people of Quebec our pride in Canada and in what it means to be Canadian, as they too are. In consulting with my constituents, I have been touched by the passion expressed towards our country, Canada. In reading the responses to the questionnaires and in listening to the people whom I met during my visits to two seniors' residences, our seniors' centre, and three malls, I was impressed to see people of all ages and backgrounds share their views and engage in dialogue about our Canadian identity.

At this point I would like to express my appreciation to those who assisted me with the dialogue process. I would like to say thank you to Colin Reichle, Aaron Zelmer, Perry Kinkaide, Michelle Chalifoux, and Pauline McCormick, who helped me collate and discuss all of the submissions from all those who took the time to tell us their views. Just as I take this opportunity to say thank you to all who contributed to our dialogue, I'd like to

read a comment from one citizen who opened his letter with this observation:

I for one appreciate the privilege to express my views on this all-important subject matter, since I personally carry the scars of a concept of unity that went wrong. Let me explain very briefly.

Born in 1927 in Germany, I learned the words "national unity" even before I could spell them. This expression meant unity under a system of National-Socialistic doctrine as the only system tolerated, and it led to a disaster for Germany and the whole free world. Stalingrad is remembered as the place we were ordered to make the supreme sacrifice, and all for "national unity."

At this point I would also like to point to some of the comments and the pragmatic views of the students who participated at the forums in the malls and to reflect what the seniors expressed in their wisdom about the knowledge of the history surrounding this issue. I heard many opinions and was offered much advice. Some shared their optimism at reaching a workable solution and their determination to speak directly to the people of Quebec to assure them that our definition of Canada is one that includes them.

I must acknowledge that the consultation responses covered the full spectrum from those who said "let them go," to those on the other hand who said, "make them stay at all cost." While some embraced enthusiastically the opportunity to discuss the unity of Canada, others told of their frustration at having to express and address this issue yet again, and they stressed they would like to see a resolution to this matter.

In the submissions there were many issues raised, some of which included working toward the clarification of the equality of each province and the acknowledgement of our historical past inclusive of all cultures and many languages. Among the many practical ideas, it was suggested that we must look at everything from relaxing the trade barriers between provinces to encouraging travel and the gathering of experiences unique to each province.

It was no surprise to find that there were some concerns with item 5 of the framework, as it was clearly felt that all provinces are unique and that Quebec is a part of the uniqueness of Canada.

I must share with this House, Madam Speaker, that the overriding message from my constituents was the strong desire to maintain Canada as it is currently configured. I have heard heartfelt emotion expressed for this country during this dialogue on unity. Over the last couple of months I with my constituents have appreciated the loyalty, desired the integrity, and witnessed the pride in a country that in my opinion could not be more deserving. I have taken the time to read and to reflect on the individual messages received from my constituents in order to bring to this House an adequate representation of their views on the Calgary declaration.

I would have to say, Madam Speaker, that within my constituency there is a genuine desire to continue to build this prosperous nation, to continue to be the envy of the world, and to send a clear message to the people of Quebec: we want to be one with you. The message is that their definition of Canada is one that includes Quebec and that their presence in this federation is of defining significance to the unity of Canada as a whole.

Incidentally, a number of seniors expressed a call for leadership on this matter. I believe the Royal Canadian Legion's declaration articulates it most precisely when it says: "the Canadian government should take immediate steps to clearly define the consequences of separation."

Madam Speaker, my constituency is one of Alberta's oldest

established communities. Our historical roots are both Francophone and Métis. Currently we have a considerable resident military personnel presence, and our schooling is significantly Francophone and French immersion. The people of my constituency are very mindful of the duality within Quebec, and they stress time and again the importance of speaking to the nonseparatist leaders of Quebec. One of my constituents summed up the Quebec issue quite succinctly when she said that if Quebec were to separate, she would truly grieve. Quite simply, so would I. I daresay we would all grieve if one part of our federation chooses to leave. I don't necessarily mean grieving with tears, but I suggest that we would experience the true sorrow of a loss. We would lose spiritually, culturally, linguistically, and financially on all fronts: provincial, national, and international. The process of adjustment that we would endure would have a dramatic effect on each one of us, perhaps more than we ever imagined or can even anticipate.

As a country that has received much recognition on the international scene for being the overall best place to live, we all too often forget that we really do have so much to celebrate. Madam Speaker, as long as we allow the separatists to direct and call for division, we are allowing the negative to speak louder than the positive and we are losing sight of the growth that can take place both within and beyond our borders. We have to ask ourselves, as one of my constituents did: what does it mean to be part of a vibrant and diverse collective of fair-minded and tolerant citizens living in a vast and blessed land? My own answer is simply: it means an inclusive Canada. The majority of my constituents felt the same way.

Madam Speaker, the support that the St. Albertans have given to the Calgary declaration has come with candid commentary and rightful enthusiasm, but it has also come with a dose of realism, for just as many people told me that we must take the necessary measures to keep Quebec within Canada, there were those who pointed out that we must consider the consequences of the possible breakdown of our country. Perilously, we would be forced to consider the uneven economic survival of the respective countries.

Finally, Madam Speaker . . . [Mrs. O'Neill's speaking time expired]

AN HON. MEMBER: You can have my time.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you.

Additionally, we would face the re-evaluation of what it means to be part of a cultural mosaic, and we would be forced to reassess Canada's moral viability of tolerance and understanding.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to conclude by proudly saying on behalf of my constituents that the majority of our residents support the motion before us in the House. Thank you for the opportunity to express this.

9:00

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I'd like to table the questionnaires that were returned from my constituency of Peace River. [interjection] A bunch.

Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, when the unity issue was first announced, I heard a lot of groans about "Why do we have to go through this thing again?" not because people in the northwest corner of this province aren't proud Canadians, but because of frustration that the leaders of one province have been able to milk this issue, on an ongoing basis, into a list of federal patronage

handouts for years. This feeling of why do this again seemed to be borne out by the notable lack of interest in attending local workshops when we tried to determine if there was any such interest. This was in spite of the fact that several people had offered to organize workshops if we could find sufficient interest.

I have to say that I was pleasantly surprised by the number of questionnaires that were returned by my constituents, and I tried to correlate this with the very little interest that was shown in the public meetings. The message I got from this was that people didn't mind sending in the form because they knew exactly how they felt about the matter, and they didn't mind sharing that view in the relatively simple questionnaire form. Much more than that, though, they weren't particularly interested in. This was substantiated when I saw the high degree of consistency in the questionnaire responses.

For principles 1 and 2 there was general agreement, as was to be expected. From there on, in principles 3 and 4 I found conditions being placed on the level of agreement. Nevertheless, to this point there was still a positive response on the whole. Principle 5 received by far the most attention, both at its place on the form and in the general comments section. This attention ranged from polite query as to why it was even included to outright hostility about the very idea of any form of special attention, unique or otherwise. The strong message was that equal means equal, and as soon as you add words like "but" or "however" or anything like them, you no longer have equality.

I want to interject at this point, Madam Speaker, that a number of the responses referred to native issues as well. Unfortunately, there wasn't a clear message on the native issue though. In fact, there was about an equal mix of concern requesting or suggesting better treatment, offset by feelings that there was already afforded too much special attention. The obvious message seemed to be that whatever we are doing on native issues, it doesn't seem to be working very well.

In general on the questionnaire, however, from all of the responses I noticed a high degree of pride in being Canadian, but that was tempered by an equally high degree of suspicion that special treatment is being contemplated for Quebec. That suspicion I would suggest was fuelled by the mere fact that Quebec was singled out as being the only province even named on the framework principles, no matter in what context.

Another interesting thing that I found, Madam Speaker, was in the response from two groups of school students. Their responses and comments were remarkably similar to the general responses that I had received. That tells me that our children are quite aware of the situation and share not only our national pride but also our concern about any special treatment.

Madam Speaker, there's an interesting dilemma in how we have to deal with the framework and the motion dealing with it. It's unfortunate that the results of the process must be categorized by a simple yes or no vote because that hardly represents the diversity of responses. From the responses that I got, the majority support the generality of the principles, but the vast majority of those put caveats on that support. If any part of the country gets any special treatment whatsoever, that means the rest are less equal. The assurances from our Premier that any real constitutional changes will be put to the people of Alberta in the form of a referendum before being endorsed by this province help me deal with that dilemma. With that understanding, I see the responses more closely align to yes than to no, so I can support the motion.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity of sharing these views with you and the members of this Assembly. Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View.

MS HALEY: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As always, it's a great honour to speak in this Assembly. Today it's even more so as all of my comments but one will come directly from the 441 submissions received from the constituents of Airdrie-Rocky View on the unity issue. I did read all 441 of these submissions and sorted them into three distinct groups.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The first group of 65 answered no to question 1. That is to say that they did not support the overall framework. The second group of 65 partially supported the framework, and the balance of 312 answered a decisive yes to question 1.

One interesting item that showed up in all three groups was a general concern with clause 5 of the Calgary declaration. That was with respect to the government of Quebec having a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec within Canada. The overriding concern on this point was that we must all be equal, regardless of how diverse or unique each of our provinces or territories is.

From the "no" submissions it was hard to pin down one specific area of concern, so I will try and just briefly list the points that they raised.

There was a concern that doing this type of a mail-out was in fact a waste of money. Some said "unique" was the same as "distinct" and was therefore unacceptable, as it takes away from the equality of all of us. Others made mention of the BNA Act and redefining provincial powers and amending the Constitution to include property rights and the triple E Senate. Some expressed concern about the provinces wanting more power versus those who insisted that the provinces must in fact have more power. Mention was made that all Canadians should vote in the next referendum, if there is in fact to be another referendum, versus that there should be no further referendums. In passing, one suggested that Alberta should separate. The balance were, to say the least, Mr. Speaker, unparliamentary in their language. I did read them, I will table them, but I won't detail them here.

The 376 remaining questionnaires, as I had indicated earlier, supported the framework, some with reservation. The balance of my comments will be to read excerpts of their remarks. First I will refer to the column on the documents where individuals could add additional comments and then conclude with comments that they made on question 6.

To begin, the first one was as follows:

1. I think perhaps a more representative balance of power should be reflected Canada-wide, be it intergovernmental affairs or economically. No doubt this is what Quebec wants, and it would be better for all provinces.
2. I was in Peru on business about one month ago. I met three young engineers (about my age of 27). I told them that I was from Canada. The next 10 minutes were filled with questions about Quebec separation. I was shocked, confused, and very disappointed that this issue encompassed so much of their perception of our country. Something needs to be done now! Stop thinking of Canada as a "family" with "emotion" and start thinking of Canada as a "team" with common goals.
3. My family and I immigrated to Canada in 1974. My son was born here; my daughter came with us. We all love this country, and my comment is this: if people want to separate their province from Canada, give them an air ticket [and tell them] to leave Canada. Do not let them break up this beautiful country we love - I am Canadian!

4. My Canada is a land of prairie, oceans, mountains, and seas, a melting pot of numerous cultures that are continually blended into a unique, truly different product - that of a Canadian - a society and a nation that values individual rights, personal freedoms and respect of fellow individuals. My Canada also has a diversity of culture throughout its many boundaries, but all those cultures together give us Canada. Each is truly distinct and truly Canadian.

9:10

5. I believe that the democratic process will ultimately result in the people of Quebec determining that they are stronger and better off in Canada. Quebecers are the same as all Canadians. They want to be able to make a living and provide for their families. We must respect their democratic right and have faith in the process. Our governments, both provincial and federal, must work to make a Canada that all citizens want [to be part of].

6. We must remember that all partnerships take work and compromise to succeed. For our country, with its great diversity, to succeed, this work and compromise is necessary. Let's not lose this country because politicians and special interest groups refuse to work together and be flexible to create a stronger whole.

7. While we applaud the efforts outlined in this movement, nothing is going to change until all provinces get involved. It is obvious to me that the leaders of Quebec have no interest in remaining in Canada. However, I firmly believe that the majority of Quebecers want to remain in Confederation.

8. Although this questionnaire is about Canadian unity, we all know that this is about Quebec separatism. I do not want Quebec to separate, and I do not believe that very many Albertans or, for that matter, very many Canadians from any province or territory would want them to separate, and I think we should tell them that. They are part of our family, the very best family in the world, and it should stay that way. I'm not sure what unique status means, but they should get no more or no less rights than any other province or territory.

9. I was born in B.C. and raised in Alberta. I am proud to reside in Alberta, but I am privileged to be a Canadian. To remain strong and free, we must not think distinctly of ourselves. We must put Canada first.

10. Quebec, with all of its ups and downs, is a great part of Canada, and we wouldn't be the same without it. I live in a farming community and hear lots of others disagree with this, but when it comes down to it, I think most would want them - if only out of respect for our history and our heritage.

11. Although I was born in Elk Point, Alberta, I have lived and worked in southeast Asia, the Middle East, and east Africa for quite a few years. I appreciated many things about those areas and their cultures but always felt very good about being a Canadian. Often I was teased about being ethnocentric, but I believed that Canada was a beautiful and great country to call my own. I appreciated the generosity and nonthreatening attitude that Canada showed internationally. I was gratified by the smiles and welcome that I received everywhere when I identified myself as a Canadian. I would like to say that I much regret to see the country . . . that I hold in such high regard threatened by what I see as petty quarreling, which often seems to be stirred up by a small group of people who hope to gain some personal political advantage or power in this way.

Finally on this section:

12. I had the opportunity to live overseas for one year. I don't think I truly appreciated what we have in Canada until I left it. Prior to that move, I'd never thought about being a Canadian. I left here an Albertan but I did come back a Canadian. Since that point my pride and love of my country have never wavered. I hope Canadians will not risk throwing away the best country in the world over petty differences.

The last question was number 6, "What does it mean to you to be a Canadian?" I had a number of people answer this in a variety of different ways, from the very young to the very old. It starts off that it means:

- I am a small part of the greatest country in the world.
- We are a family, yes, imperfect, but families must endure as must we as Canadians.
- I live in and love Canada and would die for it, if it became necessary. I don't want anyone tinkering with the future of [my country]. Set a plan in motion as Ralph has done for Alberta and stick with it. All are equal in Canada, and we need to protect equality.
- Being a Canadian gives me the privilege of living in a free and democratic country that strives to promote equality of life to every citizen equally.
- You love your country, and are willing to do anything to keep it alive.
- I am grateful to live in a free, prosperous, and safe society which allows me to live a lifestyle I choose without undue hinderance, regulations, and restrictions.
- I can speak out without fear.

From one little girl in Airdrie it says:

I am one of the luckiest people in the world. I live in the best country, the best province, and the best city! Sorry [about that], Edmonton and Calgary, but Airdrie is the best!!

To conclude, I just want to say that I read somewhere a description of teamwork, and it goes like this: coming together is the beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success. We have had our beginning as a country. The work we're doing now might be progress when all 10 provinces and two territories are working together. When we all work together, Mr. Speaker, we will have our success.

Thank you. At this time I would like to table these 441 submissions.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a great deal of pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I rise in this House as the MLA for Calgary-McCall to speak on a subject that is of so much importance to my constituents and Canadians.

This nation has been built by millions of Canadians all working together for a common cause. We have worked hard to make this country a better place and a home for ourselves and our future generations. The early settlers worked side by side not as English, French, Ukrainians, Italians, Polish, Germans, or wherever they came from, but as Canadians, as pioneers breaking new ground every day. A little over 50 years ago, when the free world was at risk, we went to war to defend democracy. I recall my grandfather taking pride in the Gurkhas and Punjabis and Africans fighting side by side with the British, the Americans, and other allies as they defended democracy. We fought as Canadians and died as Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians know when to rise to challenges. Today we are faced once again with the challenge of keeping our country united, not from fear of external forces but from within. This exercise is about rallying around a common understanding as to who we are as Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, for the residents of Calgary-McCall national unity is more than keeping our country together. It is about neighbours being able to live side by side without concern for race, religion, culture, or heritage. It is about acceptance and being free to make choices. It is about trade and commerce that puts bread on our

tables. It is about equality yet respect for our diversity.

Calgary-McCall is a very diverse constituency. Therein you will find over a hundred different cultures, languages, and faiths. I would not be exaggerating if I said that Calgary McCall is the United Nations of Alberta. In Calgary-McCall you will find the First Nations people and people with heritage from Great Britain and France living beside people from Croatia, India, Pakistan, Trinidad, Somalia, Tanzania, Lebanon, and many other countries.

You will also find Christians living beside Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, Baha'is, Taoists, Jains, Ismailis, and people of many other faiths. They are all Canadians. Their children go to the same schools, shop in the same malls, and access the same services. While walking in our parks, it doesn't matter if you are from Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Afghanistan, China, or Vietnam. They are Canadians. When they deposit their hard-earned money into their bank accounts, it doesn't matter if they came from Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Russia, Iceland, Switzerland, or Uruguay. They are Canadians. While they are shopping for groceries, the food stores don't inquire if they came from Kenya or Swaziland or Peru or Mexico. They are Canadians. When they pay taxes, it doesn't matter if they came from Hunza, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, or Denmark. They are Canadians. All Canadians are proud of their country, that has been rated by the United Nations as the best country in the world to live in.

9:20

Mr. Speaker, my constituents have given me a clear message with respect to the Calgary declaration. Eighty-three percent of the respondents support the framework being debated today. My constituents told me that most of them had difficulty with point 5, in particular the issue about unique character. Their concern was that it implied special status for Quebec. Our Premier has clarified that the term "unique character" gives no special status to Quebec; however, it recognizes and acknowledges Quebec culture, language, and civil law as being unique within Canada.

Some of my constituents felt that issues that relate to natives, justice, social programs, Senate reform, the cost of bilingualism, the right for all Canadians to vote in a referendum need to be discussed openly and should have been part of the Calgary declaration. Some noted that only in Canada bilingualism meant being able to speak English and French only. My constituents felt that speaking English and Spanish is just as bilingual as speaking French and Hindi or English and French. We felt that equality of provinces was essential and that we need to have flexible federalism where all provinces can coexist while addressing their unique needs.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Calgary-McCall I pledge our support for the Calgary declaration, and I am pleased to inform you and the members of this House that I will support the motion being debated today.

I also wish to table 155 responses received from residents of Calgary-McCall. My colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross has already tabled a report on the national unity town hall meeting jointly held by our constituencies.

In conclusion, I want to compliment the Premier and the leaders of the Liberal and New Democratic parties for working together as a team to send a message of reconciliation. History will judge you favourably for your efforts. I am proud to be part of that history.

I also wish to thank all of my constituents who sent in their responses, those who participated in our town hall meetings, and those who took the time to call me personally.

Long live Canada. Long live Quebec in Canada. Long live Alberta in Canada.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for science, research, and information technology.

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to be here this evening and talk about my Canada. Over 300 of my constituents responded to the My Canada survey, and essentially their results were the same as we've heard already. About 83 percent said: yes, we would agree with the configuration of the document. There were the same concerns that we've heard. There were concerns about the wording in item 6 and so on, and it's interesting to note that they are very similar concerns that were raised across the province.

I would just read a couple of comments that a couple of my constituents said. This comment comes from a lady in Medicine Hat who says:

All people: not the seniors, not Quebec, not what the Liberals want, not just what the Conservatives or Reform [want]. All have to work together to keep Canada together.

That's an emotion that runs through all of these 300 and some documents that we have, Mr. Speaker.

We have another document here from, once again, a lady in my constituency, in Medicine Hat. She says: "We are a strong country. Should we watch this strong house be divided and then watch it crumble?" That's what we're here tonight talking about, Mr. Speaker.

One final comment from a gentleman in Seven Persons. He says: "This is a land where equals can prosper. Conflict is in no one's best interest."

So our comments in my constituency are similar. I want to raise a couple of points. I'd like to talk briefly about point 7, which says:

Canada is a federal system where federal, provincial, and territorial governments work in partnership . . . Canadians want their governments to work cooperatively and with flexibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation.

I believe the strength of our federation lies in our ability to utilize flexible federalism. An ever greater flexibility of our federation will be a major aspect of our strength. This will be a strength that we can improve on and build on to make our federation a better federation. The key principle of this federation must be one which accepts that any given task should be performed at the smallest unit able to do the job, starting at the individual, moving next to the private sector, and then moving to reasonable small levels of government. Government must work from the bottom up rather than from the top down.

Mr. Speaker, it's incumbent that the federal government recognize this co-operative federalism. I'm not sure that they yet have, unfortunately. Witness the recent Regina greenhouse agreement, if I could call it that. I believe that if all provinces work together, if all provinces will co-operate to advance this new federalism, our country can survive, but it will only survive through co-operative federalism.

I would like to take you on a bit of my own personal journey with Canada, and I would like to start that journey in Newfoundland, where we lived for some five years and where I had a daughter born. She proudly walks around with a birth certificate showing people. When they say, "Where were you born?" in talking about their roots, she says, "I was born in Newfoundland." People don't believe her, so she pulls out this certificate and shows them that she was in fact born in St. John's, Newfoundland.

You know what I remember most about Newfoundland when we

got there? We arrived from Australia, arrived in January in St. John's, and I can tell you it was a bit of a shock. But one of the things I can remember is that they considered themselves proud Canadians. I think perhaps that may be due to the fact they were so close to Confederation. As you know, Mr. Speaker, they joined Canada in 1949, and they still talked about it. There were still people there that remembered this part of Confederation, how proud they were to be part of that movement that did that. They didn't all agree with Joey Smallwood and some of the actions that he had taken, but they all credited Joey with getting them to be part of Canada.

When we traveled, I spent anywhere from six weeks to two months every year for five years on the Labrador coast traveling from Anse-au-Loup to Fox Harbour to Nain, which is the most northern community in Labrador. When I first started going up there, you couldn't even get CBC radio up there. I know that's hard to imagine.

MR. SAPERS: How did you survive?

DR. TAYLOR: "How did I survive?" some member said.

We could get two radio services. One was Radio Moscow, their English translation, and one was Voice of America. You know, in spite of hearing all that propaganda on Radio Moscow and the truth from Voice of America, people there still considered themselves first and foremost Canadians.

We were there when TV came into Labrador, and I can remember the two favourite shows at that time. The first show that they liked most of all was Tommy Hunter. They used to sit there. It didn't matter what was happening on Friday night or what we were doing; we sat and watched Tommy Hunter with the people whose houses we were staying in. The other show that they liked was the Canadian Football League. In Nain, which is an Inuit community, their favourite team was the Edmonton Eskimos. When I got there - I was there as TV was coming in - they were just starting to watch the CFL. They actually asked me, "Is there actually a team called the Edmonton Eskimos?" So it was very interesting to see. But you know, Mr. Speaker, they considered themselves first and foremost Canadians as well.

The issue is, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Labrador and the people of Newfoundland do not want to be separated by a foreign country. They want to be part of the grand country of Canada, and they are very concerned, as I am very concerned, about that separation. I still have friends there that are teaching at Memorial. They do not want to be separated from the rest of us by a foreign country and the damage that would do. So my journey into Canada and my journey as being a Canadian first started, I think, in Newfoundland and recognizing the importance that those people saw in being Canadian, and until I lived there, I'd never really identified with that and really recognized it.

9:30

Part of my journey of being a Canadian as well is just talking to my mother in the last few weeks about this whole issue, about what being a Canadian means. I had a grandmother who was born in French Canada. I had a grandfather by the name of McConnell, who came from Scotland, stopped in Quebec, married a French-Canadian bride, and then moved west to work on the railroad. In fact, it was interesting to note that he was present at the last spike ceremony.

Grandmother Sophie was the only one of her family that left Quebec, which I find interesting. I can't remember her, but I do remember my great-grandfather, and I remember him telling me

some of the stories of how hard he worked to convince her to move west, because her whole family was there, and some of the difficulty she had when she came here. Once she was here, she learned to love Alberta and be very much a part of our culture. I can remember him telling us stories like that.

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that her blood flows in me; her blood also flows in my French-Canadian cousins. I think we have to recognize that. We are truly one. I am one with them, and they are one with me. And when it comes down to it, I want to be able to raise my hand and touch my fingertips to my French-Canadian relatives and say: my Canada is one Canada.

Thank you.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise and speak to the issue of this resolution, which I support. I rise first of all to say that it is difficult for me to speak on this subject without being very emotional. Joe Clark said that Canada is a country that's too good to lose, and I agree with that. There's nothing that makes Canada more precious to me than when I've come back from somewhere else. It doesn't matter where in the world I've traveled, returning to Canada is always a special experience.

General Lewis Mackenzie, who headed our Canadian Armed Forces in a peacekeeping mission in Sarajevo, said upon his return words to the effect: for those people that don't think that Canada is the most special place in the world to live, I invite you to spend five minutes on the streets of Sarajevo. Mr. Speaker, that is how I feel about Canada.

I think, Mr. Speaker, there are many questions that people ask about why it is so hard for us to deal with this unity issue, which appears to come back time and time again. I think there are many reasons: the history of our nation and the manner in which it was forged and the nature of the French and Indian wars that took place in this place we call Canada in the 17th and 18th centuries. I think also it is a difficult issue of unity because Canada is a nation in spite of its geography.

There are those that would argue that under the name of Canada there are really two nations. If one defines a nation as being a place where there are a large number of people mainly of common descent, a common language, culture, and history within a defined geographic area, there are those that would make the argument that there are two nations within Canada. I wish to argue that that is not in fact the case, that the history of the French is throughout Canada, not just in Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, I recently went through a book of place-names of Alberta, and I'll read out these names: Rouleau, Langevin, Villeneuve, Dubois, Daigle, Beaupre, Giroux, Therien, Lacombe, Plamondon. These are not just the surnames of Francophones; these are place-names here in the province of Alberta.

One of the special experiences that I have as the Minister of Education is to have the opportunity to speak with and meet with exchange students from other places, including our exchange students from la belle province. I do try to explain to them that their culture, their language, their history is respected in other parts of Canada, including the province of Alberta.

So, Mr. Speaker, I strongly endorse this resolution as being a step, albeit a small one, towards a greater understanding of what it is to be a Canadian, and I encourage other members of this Assembly to do likewise.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now, the hon. Minister of Community Development.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased, proud, and honoured to stand and participate in this debate on unity on behalf of the constituents of Drumheller-Chinook. My comments will reflect the responses to the framework that I received from my constituents. However, I will have to generalize as time doesn't really permit a thorough perusal of their very valuable comments.

Firstly, an appreciation to the nine Premiers and the territorial leaders whose initiative led to this event, and a special thank you to our Premier for ensuring that the process would include all Albertans. Finally and importantly, thanks to the opposition leaders for laying aside partisan politics and allowing this process to work and coming together to make sure that this process works.

The majority of the constituents that responded to the framework document expressed agreement with the overall framework. However, there were, I would say, a majority that expressed a concern with number 5. A couple of points to identify that concern: one was that this must not confer special powers that all Canadians do not have access to, and another concern was that federal financial support should not be allocated to this.

Many commented that the people of Quebec should be told the hard, cold facts of separation, and it was not felt that this had been well enunciated in any way. Examples of this that they gave were payment of their share of the federal debt, that there would not be Canadian forces bases of any size in the new country because that is not our practice, federal buildings and other infrastructures of course would not exist as we know them today.

Other points that were raised in this debate in many of the questionnaires was the need for Senate reform, that federal/provincial co-operation must occur, and above all, the belief that all provinces are equal and unique. Many of my constituents, interestingly enough, mentioned the need for our aboriginal people's place in our country. I find that interesting because there is not a reserve or a large population of aboriginal peoples in my constituency, nor has there been, but they expressed that concern many times. Certainly I must say, as others have, that many of them expressed a frustration with the continuing constitutional talks that have not led to resolution.

I guess that number 6 on the questionnaire was the most moving part for me to read, and I must say that I did read all. Over 340 responded. Some of the things they said were that they were proud to be Canadians because of equality, because of the respect that that commanded throughout the world, for freedom, for tolerance, safety, opportunity. All of these comments were good, but one student summed it up very well, and I would like to just read that again.

Being Canadian allows me to be anything and everything that I want to be. I could even be the Prime Minister if I wanted to.

Living in Canada and being a citizen of this nation allows me to be the best that I can be, reach all my goals, fulfill all my dreams and aspirations, shoot for the stars, and make my God and my country proud. I thank God for making Canada and me free.

Now, that was from a 13-year-old Albertan. I honestly believe that if we'd put some of these 13 year olds in charge of this process, we may not have taken this long to solve it.

9:40

Another comment on what it means to be Canadian comes from a lady at Jenner, Alberta:

A wonderful privilege to be born in a young, rich, vital country full of opportunity; a great responsibility to help it develop into the best we can be.

[Mr. Clegg in the chair]

Another one from Oyen:

I am proud to be a Canadian who appreciates living in a free country that will help those who are not so fortunate.

Another one from Youngstown, Alberta:

I was born a Canadian. I joined the Army to fight for the freedom of Canada. I love Canada. It's my Country.

Another from a very senior citizen in Hanna, Alberta:

It is a free country and we should be thankful and grateful to God for allowing each one of us to live in such a lovely country as Canada.

Another one from a young person in Acadia Valley:

I am safe and protected. Being Canadian means I understand that everywhere I travel within my country I will see different cultures and ways of life.

Now, those are just a few of the responses. They were all moving and I think all very participatory.

Mr. Speaker, I too am proud to be a Canadian and want my Canada to be a united Canada. I believe that is the feeling of the majority of the constituents of Drumheller-Chinook, but they did make it clear: not at any cost.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to table the documents, over 340 responses from the constituents of Drumheller-Chinook. Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

MR. HERARD: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a great honour to stand and represent the views of the constituents of Calgary-Egmont with respect to how they feel about their country as communicated through the unity consultation process. As an Albertan and as a member of this Assembly, it's a privilege to speak about the country that I love but to try and use as much as possible the words of my constituents, the people that I am honoured to represent.

To begin with, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Premier Klein and his colleagues to have the wisdom to ask the people finally, ask the people and be guided by their responses with respect to national unity matters that have for far too long been politically manipulated, sadly mishandled, perhaps in part because the processes were void of the voices of the severely normal Canadians. I thank the 400 constituents of Calgary-Egmont for their sensitive responses to the unity debate, which I will table in a few minutes. In the short time that I have I will share the views of my constituents, and time permitting, I will express the pride that I have as a fourth-generation Albertan whose roots span seven generations in the province of Quebec.

Now, I won't be repeating all of the statistics with respect to the consultation process, because the constituents of Calgary-Egmont reacted pretty much like the averages established for the province as a whole; that is for all of the questions except element 5. Of course, that is the same element that everyone else has talked about, and it deals with the unique character of Quebec. Here the level of concern from my constituents exceeded 50 percent, which is somewhat higher than the provincial average. Now, while the people of Calgary-Egmont recognize that Quebec has a unique language, culture, and legal system, they worry about conferring special status or rights that would not be available to other provinces who are also unique in their own ways. They remember Charlottetown. They remember Meech Lake and worry that the political history could repeat itself.

My constituents are extremely proud to be Canadian, and the

word "pride" was the most often-used word to describe how they feel about their country. The following is a sample of some of the neat things that my constituents had to say about Canada. One of my constituents wondered why we are in search of our own identity. So it reminds me of a T-shirt that one of my boys wore one day, saying: "I'm in search of myself. Have you found me?"

This lady says: "One only has to travel to any other continent and talk to anyone. They all seem to know and respect what it is to be Canadian." Why is it that Canadians don't know what it is to be Canadian?

The words of other constituents:

Being Canadian means to be free to live in harmony with all other peoples of the world in a country that celebrates the diversity that weaves the social fabric, the caring, tolerant attitudes and values of the people of Canada.

Being Canadian means to feel safe with a sense of belonging and being at home in any province and the ability to pursue opportunities in any vocation one chooses and to earn one's own level of success.

It means the freedom to raise and educate our children and pass on the culture, language, and faith of our choice in an atmosphere of fairness, honesty, compassion, respect, understanding, peace, and harmony in a country of unparalleled beauty with clean air and water, in a country that has the best standard of living in the world.

I think that lady said it all.

Being Canadian means carrying a passport that we can be proud of, a passport that is welcomed, respected, and that builds friendships and keeps the peace around the world.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Another constituent wrote:

Being Canadian is to be tolerant to a fault. Where else in the world would a society allow the election of a regional federal party whose design on our country fits the definition of treason?

M. le Président, si vous me permettez une observation très personnelle. J'ai un intérêt spécial investi dans l'assurance que mon Canada continue à inclure le Québec. Cet intérêt est les racines de ma famille qui, il y a quatre générations, sont venues en Alberta sortie d'un petit village sur la côte nord du Saint Laurent en face de Sorel, Québec. C'est là que les sept générations se développent depuis 1740 où ma famille a immigré pour les promesses et les opportunités d'un nouveau pays.

Ils se sont trouvés impliqués dans les difficultés qui ont abouti sur les plaines d'Abraham où la famille du côté de ma mère, une famille fière écossaise du nom de Blackburn, se combattait sur l'autre côté.

Le reste c'est à passer très naturellement à notre histoire d'assimilation, qui bénisse la plupart des familles Canadiennes avec les meilleurs traits de culture multiples et de langage desquelles je suis très fier.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, if you will permit me a personal observation, I have a vested interest in ensuring that my Canada continues to include Quebec. This interest is the very roots of my family that four generations ago came to Alberta from a small island on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence just opposite Sorel, Quebec. It was there that seven generations before in 1740 my family immigrated to the promises and opportunities of a new land.

They were soon embroiled in the turmoil that culminated on the Plains of Abraham, where my mother's family, a proud Scottish family named Blackburn, manned the other side. The rest is the natural history of assimilation that blesses most Canadian families

with the best of multiple heritage, culture, and language that I truly cherish today. [as submitted]

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for Quebecers to realize that the French fact is alive and well in Alberta, as my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake pointed out with respect to the institutions that exist in this province for learning in French, but also to realize that more than 40 percent of all Alberta students study in French. That's well over 200,000 of our kids that study in French. Now, this is a privilege that many are taking advantage of, but it's not well-known elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-Egmont supports the Calgary declaration, and I'm honoured to table 400 responses from my constituents. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

9:50

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents in Cardston-Taber-Warner. I have traveled to every province with the exception of Newfoundland. Each, I have found, is different. Everyone that has traveled in this country knows that those differences exist. Those unique, distinctive differences should be our strength, not our weakness. I've received over 350 replies from the My Canada Is brochures. Most of the replies were from people who were happy to have been asked for their thoughts.

I also held six town hall meetings advertising the Calgary declaration. Many of the people that attended these meetings were more skeptical about the unity debate. They were concerned that "unique" will take priority over "equal" as the process moves further from the grass roots. Many of those attending town hall meetings thought there was a contradiction between the words "unique" and "equal." "All provinces are unique, and they are then to be recognized as such," said one constituent. Many think that the debate for separation needs to come to a conclusion; it is very disruptive. Also, I heard from many that say that we should make it clear before the next Quebec separatist vote what the rules would be to separate, regarding their share of the national debt, the currency, the justice system, and if Quebec can be divided if they vote for separatism.

I would like to read a few comments that I received on some of the brochures. One of my constituents says

To me to be a Canadian means the right to raise my family in a free land with the prospect for the future generation to enjoy the same rights. I feel to me to be a Canadian means the right to support my family through the economic endeavours that I choose with as little interference from government as possible. While I feel I should have all the rights that every other Canadian has, I also feel it is my responsibility to ensure that I do not interfere with the ability of other Canadians to enjoy the same rights.

Another constituent says:

A house, family or country divided will not stand! To favour one member of a family over another or people over another will tear the country apart. I believe that all citizens in Canada want to be dealt with with fairness.

Another constituent says, "No special rights to any race, religion, colour, lobby group, province for any reason."

Another constituent is the former MLA from Cardston, John Thompson. He retired in 1986. He says:

Up until about 30 years ago the Federal Government more or less respected provincial rights as set out under the BNA Act and Quebec more or less accepted the relationship. However, since that time there has been a steady erosion of this relationship and

in my mind until Ottawa backs away from its present position our country will remain in a state of tension.

I appreciate the Provincial Government giving me this opportunity to express my views on the state of our nation and believe me I am concerned.

A social 10 student in Sterling writes:

I can't stress enough how important national equality is to me. I don't think it fair that Quebec is being bribed to stay in Canada with extra benefits.

Mr. Speaker, today's reality is that the majority of French in Quebec will not settle for less than control of language and culture. Our goal is to find a solution and still maintain a meaningful federation.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the majority of the people in Cardston-Taber-Warner constituency believe that we will need to give Quebec a good honest try of tough love.

I would now like to table some 350 responses to the Calgary declaration. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to rise here this evening. Being number 77 or 78, as you can imagine, a lot of things have already been said to this point.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, before this process started, I was anything but a fan of it. Being the head of the Social Policy Council, I saw a process across Canada where nine ministers and two territorial representatives sat at the table discussing the future of social policy in this country. There was one notable absence, which was Quebec. It became very disheartening when Quebec would not send a minister to this very important conference.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that happened was at the First Ministers' meeting in St. Andrews. I had the privilege of sitting in on the meetings, and Lucien Bouchard would talk the action. He would say exactly what the other Premiers were saying until it came time to make a decision. At that time his advisers would hand him a piece of paper, and he would read his prepared text. It would be completely different to the discussion he was just having. That does not bode well for Canada.

When it comes to the concept that I am a firm believer in, flexible federalism, I think we have seen an example in the last two weeks that strikes a blow to Canadian unity, and that is the federal government going to Kyoto, disregarding what the consensus of the provinces and the federal government at that time had to say about greenhouse gas emissions. Mr. Speaker, that made me extremely disheartened when it came to Canadian unity.

However, that changed. This process, which at first I thought was going to be a very big chore, of going out and talking to people, of reading the brochures – and 392 brochures came from my constituency. Mr. Speaker, what the people of the Strathmore-Brooks constituency had to say was absolutely fascinating. I embraced this process to a degree that I did not expect myself to. I talked to approximately 50 people, 30 people in Brooks and 20 people in Strathmore at a town hall meeting, and I talked to two grade 10 classes. It was absolutely fascinating what they had to say about Canada.

Quite briefly, what they had to say about the Calgary declaration was twofold. First of all, first and absolutely foremost, all provinces should be equal. Period. End of discussion. That means no special powers, be they of a constitutional or a day-to-day or a functional nature. With that as a given, they would believe in the word "unique," but they stated that the word

“unique” was not the best term. “Distinct” was absolutely out, but “unique” was not the best term. So I challenged them. I said, “Well, tell me the word to use.” They couldn’t come up with a word, but they hesitantly agreed to use the term “unique” provided that in the preamble it stated that all provinces were equal.

Mr. Speaker, secondly what they said – and this is something that I have not heard in the speeches here prior to this – is that if there’s another sovereignty vote by Quebec, all Canadians must be allowed to participate in this vote, not just Quebecers. It is imperative that all of Canada have a say in what happens in Quebec because what happens in Quebec affects all of Canada.

What I would like to do now, Mr. Speaker, is just give you an idea of what some of the people had to say in my constituency. Be it what it may, my constituency could conservatively be called a redneck constituency. I know you find that hard to believe, but some of the responses are quite touching.

If I may, I’ll start off with a lady from Brooks: “I was brought up in Japan during the war, and now that I’m living in Canada, I thank God for what we have every day.”

10:00

Mr. Speaker, I had an E-mail from someone from Strathmore: I’m proud to live in what is still the finest country in the world. I’m proud to be Canadian, and to me this means more than flag-waving and anthem-singing. It is a quiet patriotism, which is no less fervent for being understated. It means that when push comes to shove, I will stand behind Canada, no matter what.

A gentleman in Bassano wrote:

Being a Canadian means being yourself no matter what your origin or heritage. It means being part of a country that allows you to enjoy the wealth and prosperity that can come from hard work. It means providing the opportunity to start a family and raise your children in an environment of freedom and order that our social and government structures can provide. It means the capability to stand alone yet know that your neighbours and friends are right behind you. It means being what you are, being allowed to be what you are, and being proud of what you are.

A gentleman from Siksika – and for those of you who don’t know, Siksika is the aboriginal reserve in my constituency – wrote:

We are a very fortunate nation of people. We should appreciate our country and its diversity and the diversity of many cultures who live here. We must not fear each other but learn from each other. We are blessed. Stop complaining about everything unless we can offer solutions. Our politicians do try but could listen more. We could all listen more.

What he states about being a Canadian, which when you consider coming from the aboriginal background, is quite amazing:

I am proud to be a Canadian, but I would be prouder if we would

try harder to have First Nations (aboriginals) treated better.

A gentleman from Strathmore wrote: “It is my entire existence. There is no way to put into words how proud and honoured I am to be Canadian.”

A possibly young gentleman from Carseland wrote:

Like any organization, a country has to work as a team. I am a Canadian because I choose to belong on the Canadian team. Those who choose not to belong should be allowed to leave, in fact encouraged to leave.

Another gentleman from Brooks wrote: “Thanks for giving it a try. Let’s get on with it. If this doesn’t work, let’s call their bluff,” in relation to the Quebec question.

Probably one of the most touching letters that I received came from a couple in Brooks, and what they stated – they got a little off on a tangent about their plight – but the way they ended it on being a Canadian was: “Being a Canadian to us means being in debt forever.” Mr. Speaker, I think that’s something that all of us on this side and the other side can think about as we go into the budgeting process.

That being what it may, Mr. Speaker, this has been a great exercise. I certainly thank the Premiers for doing this, and I thank our Premier for taking the lead on this in the Calgary declaration. I will say that on behalf of the constituents of Strathmore-Brooks, I will be supporting the declaration as put forward in the House.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I’d be more than happy to adjourn debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before calling the vote on the issue, the chair is led to understand that Public Accounts is in here first thing in the morning, so those people who have things on their desk or if they can clear off their neighbours’ desks in the first couple of rows, that would be helpful.

The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services has moved that we adjourn debate on Motion 23. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

Now the hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[At 10:06 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]