

Citizens' Forum  
on  
Canada's Future

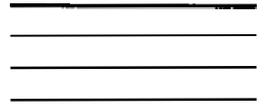


Le Forum des citoyens  
sur  
l'avenir du Canada

# Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future

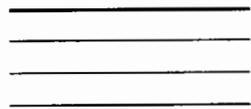
*Report to the People  
and Government of Canada*

# **Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future**



**Report to the People  
and Government of Canada**

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on  
Canada's Future



Le Forum des citoyens  
sur  
l'avenir du Canada

Chairman's Office

Bureau du Président

**TO HIS EXCELLENCY  
THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN COUNCIL**

**MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY**

In accordance with Order in Council PC 1990-2347 dated November 1, 1990,  
I have the honour to submit to you the report of the Citizens' Forum on Canada's  
Future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Spicer'.

**Keith Spicer  
Chairman  
June 27, 1991**

**The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future  
had the following members:**



Richard Cashin\*

Carole Corcoran

Fil Fraser

Thomas Kierans

James Matkin

Robert Normand\*

Raymond Sirois

Keith Spicer, Chairman

Roger Tassé

Susan Van De Velde

Elsie Wayne

Helena Zukowski

\*Additional comments begin on page 139.

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# Chairman's Foreword

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*"One of these days, all the persons in Canada will be Canadians." — Chief Dan George.*

*"Ignorance fathers contempt." — Quebec poet Félix Leclerc.*

Canadians used to believe — and many still hope — that they harbour some special genius for compromise. It's at least as easy to prove that our real knack is for turning opportunities into problems.

Seen from abroad by both foreigners and Canadians, Canada looks like paradise. Long queues of immigrants — seeking freedom, tolerance and prosperity — say so. So does the United Nations: apart from calling on us routinely as a trusted peacekeeper, it estimates that we enjoy the second highest level of "human development" on earth (after Japan, based on literacy, schooling, life expectancy, national wealth).

Yet seen from within, Canada looks to Canadians like a pessimist's nightmare of Hell. That's the message we get from almost all our elites — politicians, bureaucrats, media, business and unions, even, sometimes, our artists — who, outside Quebec, tend to be eloquent, but often voluptuously anxious about Canada; and inside Quebec studiously indifferent.

Let's be honest: we're all a bit guilty of running down Canada. Dumping on this sprawling, fragile nation without nationality is our homegrown idea of flag-waving. The only exceptions? Recent immigrants who haven't yet got the hang of it.

When all is said and done, Canada is a breath-taking challenge of perspective — perspective of mind and heart. You can try to find this in Rimouski or Weyburn or — if you really want the long view — Tuktoyaktuk. But really to appreciate who we are and what we've got here you're probably best to think of Canada in the world.

Last fall 12 of us could not seek perspective on Canada from afar. The government asked us to stay home to try a little open-soul surgery on 26 million Canadians.

Now eight long, sometimes heartbreaking, but mind-stretching months later, how does the Forum look

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to those of us so privileged to listen to the Canadian people as we have?

Fondly recalling all our well-advertised faults, I believe we have pioneered, on the run, a democratic process which Canadians have found liberating. With all its weaknesses but with lessons learned, it can prove a people's bridge to help politicians of all parties cross some perilous rivers to find new solutions.

We have tried our best, in the short time we had, to listen carefully to citizens. We have tried to improve the climate of dialogue among our disconnected, and often angry and confused, peoples thinly scattered over thousands of kilometers bordered by three oceans.

Now we offer our best effort at reporting faithfully the values and dreams Canadians told us they shared. We echo loudly and, we think, without much distortion, the strong if sometimes contradictory ideas they put forward.

Finally, we offer here some opinions and suggestions of our own. These try to draw on citizens' eloquently expressed values and dreams, and to resolve a few of these contradictions into some broad directions for the future.

We believe most of our participants, and many other Canadians, will recognize their hopes in these roadmap indicators.

For those who doubted their views would ever get through to the government, we are happy to report some at least rhetorical scooping of this report. Our staff's interim theme report, published on March 20, has by all accounts made some impact on senior government officials.

Even the Speech from the Throne, which in May set out the government's broad plans, echoed quite a few points citizens expressed publicly through the Forum.

A speech is just a speech, as time goes by. But citizens who expected our report would collect dust, not endorsements, may take cautious heart — subject to the government's following through — that several of their ideas have bubbled upward so quickly into the nation's political vocabulary, even before we could publish this report.

I spoke of compromise. This whole report is based on that. It is not *my* personal report, nor is it any single commissioner's. It is the hard-negotiated consensus of

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several citizens of often radically different backgrounds and convictions, who all thought it worth struggling to find a consensus on some basics. If this reflects the kind of minimum agreement politicians will have to hammer out to keep a country, perhaps we have sent a message of realistic hope to Canadians.

Apart from proving again that a committee cannot write a novel, this consensus leaves some of us wishing to add some personal observations. Two of my colleagues do so at the end of this report. This is my place to add my own emphasis to a point or two beyond our consensus.

A word first on the central issue of reconciling our two main communities, the English-speaking and the French-speaking, the latter about 90 per cent anchored in Quebec.

Personally I have sensed during this last spring that — partly in response to deep-seated issues, partly through finally facing the risk of Quebec's independence — a more thoughtful and heartfelt English-speaking sense of community is in the making, and growing quickly.

Some of it is frightened and confused; some of it angry. But mainly I see the people's continuing dialogue generating a new potential for English-speakers' self-confidence and, among other benefits, a possibly franker, yet open, dialogue with Quebec.

Leaders can channel this into constructive positions which Quebeckers, as well as English-speaking Canadians, can relate to. Quebeckers can probably come to terms more easily with a tougher, more coherent and principled English-speaking Canada than with the smorgasbord of "English-Canadian" jurisdictions and positions that have made our political system so entertaining to political scientists, so profitable to lawyers, and so perplexing to us all.

On the French-speaking side, there is both great confidence in Quebec — shaded by more caution and open-mindedness than many outsiders think — and great worry among French-speaking communities living elsewhere in Canada. There is a logical way of viewing the interdependence of Quebeckers and their scattered brethren.

A culturally strong Quebec is not some new demand, as some think, nor does it contradict federal official bilingualism. Quebec and federal bilingualism —

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not to mention some provincial bilingual services outside Quebec — are, and always have been, two sides of the same coin: practical fair play for all citizens using our two major working languages, English and French.

Federal bilingualism and English-speaking Canada's enthusiastic embracing of French immersion for its children complement and support Quebecers' natural wish for respect, as well as serving English-speakers' own interests.

But Quebec is the heart of the matter. Quebec is the only jurisdiction in North America where French-speakers can feel completely free, respected and secure. For there, because they form a majority and control their key institutions, they can defend the healthy predominance of their language and culture — culture in the broadest sense: all the ways Quebecers want to be themselves. This they can accomplish mostly within even today's Canada, and fully within a renewed Canada.

Plainly, the vitality of French-speaking communities elsewhere in Canada depends not only on their own vibrant efforts and sympathetic provincial governments, but on the twin pillars of federal language policy and a culturally strong Quebec. Both of these need the governments' firm and unambiguous backing.

It is a false contradiction to argue *either* for Quebec's cultural strength or for federal bilingualism. To root justice in our country for both communities — including anglophones in Quebec — we need both. As Quebecers and their 20 million imperfect, sometimes bad-humoured allies in English-speaking Canada understand this better in the whole *North American* context, I think they can, together, make more sense to each other. And that is the indispensable start to any lasting new understanding.

Aboriginal peoples were also a high priority in our consultation. We have listened attentively to those few we could reach, and we listened respectfully to the silence of the others. It too told us things you will read here.

For some time I have believed that the First Nations — far from being *only* a moral challenge and a 'problem' for Canada — must be a prominent part of our solutions.

First, because they can help us grasp the huge land we share, and teach us how to respect it. Next, because

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normally aboriginals tend to take a more consensual, less adversarial, approach to settling differences — an approach we can only dream our politicians might learn. Finally, with their rich and varied culture, aboriginal peoples can bring us to a deeper sense of spirituality about our life and destiny in Canada.

On constitutional reform, I would urge the government to reconsider its dismissal of some kind of constituent assembly, or similar process allowing citizens to feel directly involved in constitution-making. On the contrary, the government should try to encourage a more informed people's debate on the pros and cons of this idea, and of possible variations. Any such mechanism would have to include unbreakable guarantees that neither Quebec nor any region could be overwhelmed by majority votes: the rule would be extremely high consensus.

Many Canadians, especially outside Quebec, have questions about key aspects of this assembly approach, yet find it attractive.

So do I, believing it might at least refine the principles for a new constitution before final drafting. And it might give that fundamental law more credibility than today's wounded political system could. The government, just by announcing its mind is still open, would invite academics and media to expose citizens to the full range of practical arguments on both sides of the assembly idea. In this way, Canadians could either embrace some version of it knowingly, or lay it to rest.

I also think that, if we can work out a new constitution, politicians should somehow submit it to the people. Such a consultation might occur through a referendum demanding strong majorities in Quebec and all regions; or through some manifestly non-partisan, but more thorough, Citizens' Forum. Two cautions: such a process should be preceded by the most careful negotiation, and should be crafted in a way to ensure that it can unite us more than it divides us.

Some variations on the assembly idea and on citizens' ratification of our constitutional ground rules seem necessary to restore our people's sense of owning their democracy. A political system at least partly designed by the people and broadly approved by them will be far easier to trust, as will the politicians representing us within it.

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The Senate. I have long considered the idea of an appointed law-making body a deep affront to democracy. The outrageous behaviour of some senators in recent years has not just besmirched the many fine individuals who sit there. It has shaken Canadians' faith in our entire political system. I favour serious study of such formulas as the "Triple-E" Senate (equal, elected, effective) or — perhaps better — some adaptation of the German *Bundesrat* "House of the Provinces" kind of upper house, with provincial leaders and their key ministers being *ex officio* members of it.

A formula such as these examples — and there are other models — might give provinces much more influence at the centre; it might make federal-provincial co-ordination of policies easier; and it would do it all in the light of day, through politicians with elected authority publicly debating issues, rather than settling things in the shadows among themselves or through bureaucratic sherpas. Failing some fundamental reform, as my colleagues agree, we should abolish the Senate.

Our northern territories. The Yukon and Northwest Territories remain our last frontier, with very few people but an almost ungraspable potential. We need ways to allow the people living there to be heard more in Ottawa and at the constitutional table. We need, for the sake of all Canadians, to make a concerted effort to learn much more about the unique challenges, opportunities and culture of the North. And we need to bring the idea of North more vividly into the imagination of Canadians as a unifying factor. Canada is a northern country.

Concerning the prime minister, I consider that our consensual editing of Part II does not adequately echo the anger directed at him, and that Part III does not fully assess why it exists and what it means. I think our text assumes a little too much that all criticism comes with the territory; and it too readily treats the prime minister as "just another politician" among many who deserve criticism.

The top person is of course always a lightning rod. And it is true that Canadians show little regard for opposition leaders, or many provincial ones either.

→ But people wielding great power must be held responsible for how they wield it. And I think that, from most citizens' viewpoint, our report lets the PM off too lightly. At least for now, there is fury in the land

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against the prime minister. And although I happen to respect him much more than many, I have to say that I think our consensual editing understates the discontent with him.

This said, I think it only fair to add that the prime minister — even after observing from our open process that our report would strongly attack him and several of his policies — has kept his word to me, given at the outset, that this report would be made universally available to Canadians. We are making it available in several forms. Besides the formal report, there are radio and television versions, newspaper supplements across Canada, a cassette version for the blind, as well as a youth report.

On the environment, I favour a much stronger environmental priority for Canada, in *reasonable* balance with Canadians' legitimate economic needs. Policies and controls should protect such essentials, among others, as clean air and water; renewable resources such as forests; historic lands; and endangered species.

Plainly Canadians want an advanced industrial society and a high standard of living, and these exact environmental costs. But all governments need to develop better consultative mechanisms to reconcile economic and environmental needs. Given the high degree of polarization on this subject, realistic public education on the need for such reconciliation is also vital.

A last point about the Forum itself. The government put it together hastily, in response to an urgent situation. It imposed on it an unwieldy structure that enormously complicated its work and made it harder to clearly distance itself from the government.

Last fall, the situation may have demanded that the government kickstart this Forum. Ideally, however, any new Citizens' Forum should be created, run and financed by citizens themselves. A government-run citizens' forum is a contradiction in terms.

An impression, finally, which I believe is shared by most, if not all, of my colleagues.

Having criss-crossed this country in every direction, and met people of every origin and status, in large towns, tiny hamlets and farms, I find a deep similarity of values and ideals among Canadians.

That similarity includes British-origin Canadians, Quebeckers and other French speakers, Canadians of other immigrant cultures, aboriginal peoples — *every-*

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*one* — with enough in common to bind us far more strongly than now. When you look at a demographic map of our country, and remember that Canada, in population terms, is Chile laid on its side and broken by hundreds-of-kilometre gaps between many communities, this body of shared values and ideals is astonishing. What are these values and ideals?

Freedom and dignity in diversity, with openness to all cultures and races; a sensitive democracy; social solidarity; an orderly, safe society; a clean environment; the often unspoken idea of North; a peace-supporting, more independent role in an increasingly interdependent world; a yearning to love this country in any way each individual chooses, without apology — the right to be a Canadian in different ways, times and places, or not very much at all.

The more intimate loyalties and interests every province and territory wishes to protect vary, but each should be free to protect them in different ways, adapted to local realities — northern, western, Atlantic, or Quebec or Ontario.

Canada is grappling with twin crises — one of structure, the other, more profound and delicate, of the spirit.

Both structure and spirit combine to make a blueprint for a society. But the spirit — that is, shared ideas, ideals, dreams and confidence — will in the long run overwhelm any structure, however ingenious.

The curse of our political system since the beginning has been to put structures first, last and always — then to wonder why nobody believed Canada was anything more than amending formulas, notwithstanding clauses and an awful lot of jurisdiction-crazy bureaucrats.

Now we face a spiritual crisis which demands we find, in a very short time, new structures we hope will last a very long time. Listening to thousands of Canadians, including some so alienated that they rejected the very name Canadian, I draw certain conclusions.

Citizens want leaders to listen to their electors, but then to *lead* them with vision and courage, not govern by polls or play sterile partisan games; therein lies a contradiction good politicians are paid to resolve.

If our leaders show common sense, imagination, generosity and much courage, call a ceasefire in their jurisdictional guerrilla wars and try to build a lasting

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peace for us before a world horizon, they can translate most Canadians' hopes for a fair and workable future to include us all, whatever the structures needed.

All of us — citizens as much as politicians — must play our part by taking personal responsibility and initiative to continue the dialogue among all Canadians.

All of us must use such dialogue to listen, learn and, when necessary, change the most difficult thing in the world to change: our own minds.

This country is dying of ignorance, and of our stubborn refusal to learn. Lazy, cynical official minds have too long dismissed the obvious practical answers to these problems as 'simplistic' and 'naive' — broad travel and exchange opportunities, for example, and better teaching of at least some shared history. To reconcile the hereditary enemies of France and Germany, two plainly simplistic and naive men did all that. Their names: Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer.

The only way to turn today's crisis into opportunity is new thinking, courageous rethinking, with open minds and hearts in a world perspective. Given human reluctance to change, Canadians' historic conservatism, and the damaging stereotypes that now pass for truth, this rethinking will prove very, very hard.

But this country is worth the effort. So says the world, and so say most Canadians.

Many of us started this work skeptically: about the mission, the means, the outcome, or each other. Not all of us were convinced that, even if we did our work well, we would be listened to by the government. Not all of us were convinced that, even if we were, anything could salve our social wounds or stop what seemed like the inevitable fragmentation of Canada.

I reach the end of our phase of this work — which is just part of the beginning of the beginning — feeling considerably more optimistic. The hundreds of thousands of citizens who gave their time and hope, their ideas and creativity, turned out not to be as bleakly sullen, cynical and unresponsive as we had feared. Their positions were not as polarized. Their battle lines were not carved into trenches.

There is much left to be done, and many difficulties to overcome. But we think that our work at least broadly maps out directions most Canadians want this country to take. There is clearly room enough for all of us in this mythical canoe of Canada, providing we re-

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open our minds and respect each other's dignity in our diversity.

Something else. While keeping our values, we must each take more responsibility for our individual happiness. We must stop expecting politicians and bureaucrats to deliver all our wishes and whims immediately, totally and, if possible, gift-wrapped.

The Forum's suggestions are aimed at helping politicians frame the difficult decisions that will make or break this country. We have tried, even when offering them a cold shower of unpleasant truths, to help them heal us through a new strategy of hope.

I am still skeptical about many things, but not about Canada. I believe the people have told us: we can all live together on this unimaginable land. Our long-proven genius for compromise can and must and will allow us to adapt to new relationships with each other, even astonishingly new ones.

The idea of Canada as a model for mankind is a grand one, worth defending far more passionately than many of us, or our leaders, do.

The eternal challenge and measure of Canada is a dream in perspective. Too often an archipelago of envies and anxieties, we forget in our obsession with petty quarrels how consoling the vision of a harmonious Canada remains to the world. Consoling and inspiring.

How much energy, imagination, decency and love we squander by forgetting what Canada means to the world. How much we can achieve for ourselves, our children, and for the world, if we seize the opportunity of today's crisis of our spirit to renew and strengthen that spirit.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's prediction that the 20th century would belong to Canada came only partly true. We have grappled all these decades with our growth from childhood to adolescence to troubled young adulthood. Now, if we keep our heads, and seek an eclipsing perspective of our problems, we can make the 21st century ours by growing into a model civilization — a mature and welcoming homeland for mankind.

If we decide to reach for such an ideal, Canadians' awkward accommodations may disappoint some who yearn, for often excellent and healthy reasons, to wave flags of various colors. But first we must stay true to

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who we really are. And to how much we share: our hearts beat in closer harmony than we dare to hear.

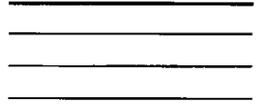
Some years ago, the poet, Patrick Anderson, said Canada is "the wind that wants a flag." Perhaps, some day, if we shake off our fears and learn to know each other as human beings, then some brisk northern wind will find our flag, and all our flags, and remind us that a country starts and ends with its people.

K.S.

## **A Word of Gratitude:**

I thank all my comrades-in-arms for helping make the Forum's unlikely miracle more or less work: my fellow commissioners — who, after many months of hard work and argument, came to a minimum consensus on which politicians may build; our awesomely dedicated staff guided so ably by our executive director David Broadbent; our lifeblood moderators and regional directors; and our wonderful, public-spirited volunteers. I also thank the churches, voluntary groups and corporations who were so generous. Warmest thanks and respect of all to the hundreds of thousands of far-above-'average' citizens — young and old, and of all backgrounds and persuasions — who contributed their ideas and dreams. We dedicate this report to you, and to all the citizens of Canada.

# **Part I**



**Our task and  
how we went  
about it**

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## 1. The context

On November 1, 1990, the federal government announced the creation of the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future and sent it on a mission to listen to the people to find out what kind of country they wanted for themselves and their children.

The prime minister called the Forum "an independent body of eminent Canadians who will launch a dialogue with people across the country and help create a consensus about Canada and our future." He called the situation in Canada "urgent" and the problem "serious."

In 1982, the federal parliament and nine provincial legislatures agreed on the Constitution Act, which would bring the constitution home from Britain to Canada on April 17, 1982. The only legislature that did not agree was Quebec. New negotiations led to the proposed Constitution Act of 1987, accepted by the 11 then first ministers. This act dealt specifically with Quebec demands. Quebec had come aboard, but the new Constitution Act, known as the Meech Lake accord, had to be ratified by the Parliament of Canada and all 10 provincial legislatures within three years. The deadline of June 23, 1990 passed without the necessary unanimous ratification. The Meech Lake accord died.

The failure at Meech Lake left Quebecers feeling betrayed and rejected by what would become known, almost territorially, as "the rest of Canada." Other Canadians felt powerless, ignored and abandoned, isolated from each other, and disgusted with their decision makers.

Although they did not kill it, Canada's aboriginal peoples opposed the Meech Lake accord. A critical factor was the failure of four First Ministers' Conferences between 1983 and 1987 to resolve the issue of native self-government. As Quebec felt betrayed by the failure of the Meech Lake accord, so aboriginal peoples felt betrayed by the constitutional process.

The summer and fall of 1990 was also the year when the longstanding grievances of aboriginal peoples, aggravated by indifference, reached the boiling point. Unfortunate events, unprecedented in modern Canadian

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history, at many places across the country, brought national and international attention to the situation of Canada's aboriginal peoples.

## 2. The task

With only eight months to do its job, the Forum set out to collect and focus citizens' ideas for *their* vision of the country, and to improve the climate of dialogue by lowering the level of distrust. (This was our broad mandate. For our detailed mandate, see Appendix A.)

We quickly realized that we had neither the time nor expertise to study longstanding aboriginal issues. We so advised the prime minister, who agreed.

The Forum's task was to get Canadians talking among themselves about vital issues that faced a perplexed nation: Quebec's quest for a new relationship with the rest of Canada; aboriginal grievances and aspirations; official languages; ethnic and cultural diversity; fundamental Canadian values; the economy; and Canada's place in the world.

The Forum began with the question, "Does the Canadian family still want to live together?" And if it does, how? If Canadians at the grassroots level could have a substantive role in shaping their country's future, what would be the Canada of their dreams?

This was not to be a traditional royal commission. Instead of asking citizens to come to the Forum, the Forum would go to the people — in their living rooms and kitchens, schools and universities, church basements and temples, farms and reserves, boardrooms and chambers of commerce, YM/YWCAs, union halls, parks, theatres — even trains, prisons, street shelters.

From a standing start on November 1, 1990, to this Final Report promised by July 1, 1991 — Canada Day — some 400,000 Canadians participated in the Forum and over 300,000 Canadian elementary and secondary students participated in our separate Students' Forum — far more than any other commission of enquiry in the history of our country. Participants attended group discussions, they called a Forum toll-free Idea Line, they sent in briefs and letters and individual reports, they created thousands of pieces of art specially for the

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Forum, wrote short plays or skits (four presented at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa), penned a few songs and, for some reason, hundreds of poems. Most, if not all, participants also spoke to family, friends and colleagues about their experience, bringing the effervescence of new dialogue to many more people whose numbers we cannot even estimate.

### 3. The tools

To make the consultation process as accessible as possible, the Forum decided to go to citizens wherever they were most comfortable. We wanted to reach people who would not easily have appeared before a traditional royal commission. This time, we wanted all Canadians to have an opportunity to have their say.

#### a) *Idea Line*

Our first step was to set up within six days a toll-free Idea Line, in French and English, so that Canadians could call from wherever they lived to ask questions, give advice and vent their frustrations and grievances. The Idea Line helped us get a feel for the country and many callers provided us with useful suggestions for conducting the Forum.

We had early organizational difficulties responding to calls on our Idea Line, difficulties which irritated some callers, but after refinements the system worked well. This Idea Line gave citizens a handy first contact with the Forum, and their comments echoed the emotional tones of open-line radio shows — although in later months our carefully trained operators were able to engage callers in longer, more constructive dialogue. At the same time, operators noted their views on a special form for our professional analysts, who studied callers' comments in the same thorough way they did reports from discussion groups.

These telephone talks could not usually reach the depth and varied interchange of the groups. But even with its weaknesses, this immediate and universally accessible link to the Forum was highly appreciated, and allowed us to cross-check our conclusions from the groups, briefs and letters.

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By the time the Idea Line had to be closed down at the end of April, we had received 75,069 calls, some brief; others lasting into half an hour.

***b) Group Discussions***

Early on, we devised special kits for groups to make the Forum a grassroots, do-it-yourself commission of enquiry. This was the heart of our process. These group discussion kits contained questions to elicit opinions and insight on the issues at stake and to encourage frank exchange among participants. The questions were tested on groups of citizens, some of whom had called the Idea Line to volunteer their services. As the process continued, the questions became discussion points, revised to make them more approachable and to encourage greater response and candour.

We developed a cadre of trained moderators who met early in January on the snowy campus of Trent University in Peterborough for an intense and enthusiastic weekend seminar/training session. Experts were brought in to brief the moderators on language, aboriginal issues, regionalism, multiculturalism, constitutional law and economics. They also explained the process of the Forum and how to conduct group discussions. Some of those who attended the “moderators’ college” were regional coordinators in their provinces and territories, recruiting and training other moderators and volunteers. Small regional offices were established in all provinces and territories. Completed reports sent in to the Forum show that while many discussion groups used the Forum’s own trained moderators, many other groups took place by citizens’ own initiative, with their own moderators, or no moderator. Many groups didn’t find time to return a report; perhaps the discussion itself was what mattered most to them.

Our first proposed list of discussion points in early January stuck closely to our official mandate. But, as we predicted at the outset, we quickly had to simplify this list (in mid-February) and adapt it to citizens’ own perception of key issues. In the end, the citizens did it their way. Many insisted on continuing to use our first, more complex list. Some cast both our lists aside to have a free-for-all discussion. A few — for example, at

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Pointe-de-l'Église in Nova Scotia — scrapped all our documents to invent their own, which they liked better.

The citizens soon let us know who was going to run the Forum. The way each session unfolded varied enormously. Some groups were hesitant and sober at the start, others immediately angry and confrontational. But nearly all seemed to flower in the second or third hour of discussion into passionate outpourings, whether quietly or noisily expressed. People listened to each other, debated, talked on or off the subject as they chose, sometimes laughed, and not infrequently cried. They argued politely, then bluntly, but always caringly. By the end of virtually every discussion, participants spoke of relief, excitement, gratitude, even exhilaration. Discussion mostly took the form of exchange of views and ideas, without necessarily trying to reach consensus.

Also at the end, the moderator or — more often — an elected rapporteur, was requested to fill out a group report which our professional analysts studied against a list of, eventually, over 2,000 key words. Each participant was also free to fill out a personal report form, and many did so. Apart from analyzing both types of reports according to the system explained in Appendix B, we collected and keyed to 38 major themes thousands of specific quotations from which we culled those for this report.

The Forum invited the help of many national organizations — churches, service clubs, youth groups, professional associations, unions and others. This led to requests, from the organizations and spin-off groups, for 10,839 discussion kits to be distributed to their members.

More than 150 major national organizations — multicultural, religious, service and general interest associations — responded by actively promoting group discussions among their memberships. Municipalities were urged to develop exchanges with communities in other regions. Nearly two dozen such exchanges were planned during the Forum's mandate.

Through national organizations and municipalities, the Forum was able to reach Canadians from all walks of life.

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As part of the Forum's own Outreach Program, group discussions were organized on 42 university and college campuses, involving some 15,000 participants. The Outreach Program also organized "affinity groups," bringing together groups with common interests — engineers and engineers, farmers and farmers, people in small towns in Quebec and small towns in the rest of Canada — from different parts of the country. Some 30 francophone citizens in St. Boniface, Vanier, Quebec City and Moncton conducted a discussion on a teleconference call. Group discussions were also held among Canadians posted abroad, in several cities across the United States, in Europe, Brazil, Yugoslavia, Japan, among CIDA workers in Africa and Canadian students studying at Oxford University.

By 31 May 1991 — the date we stopped counting in order to get this report to print — we knew for sure that 7,681 group discussions had taken place because we had either received the group reports from 180,667 people who had participated in these groups or had the numbers confirmed by moderators.

But as we said, we also know that a large number of groups held discussions and never got around to filling out the group report or sending it in to us. A survey carried out by our people in the regions revealed that, of those who had received discussion kits, for at least every ten groups who had held discussions and sent in a report to the Forum, another five to ten groups had never sent back any report. On this basis, and using 31 May numbers, our best estimate of the total number of Forum group discussions that took place is more than 13,000, involving some 315,000 participants.

***c) Letters, Briefs and Individual Kits***

Besides the group discussions, Canadians who wished to express themselves at more length and in greater depth submitted 7,056 letters and briefs. Some were over 50 pages long. Some had footnotes. All were thoughtful, concerned and usually very moving.

The Forum also designed special kits for individuals to use alone. We estimate that some 3,000 individuals chose to participate in this way.

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#### d) *Students' Forum*

A separate Students' Forum enabled young Canadians — elementary and secondary school students — to discuss their country's future. (Their report, *Young People Speak*, is published separately). The students used age-specific discussion kits designed and distributed by the Canadian Teachers Federation with Forum funding. Some 249 volunteers spent 4,607 hours analyzing reports for these groups.

Elementary students said many moving and thought-provoking things to their elders, and secondary students often astonished us by the wisdom and depth of their views.

This special youth consultation — in which the Quebec teachers' union did not wish to join — aimed first to respect young peoples' right as citizens to speak their views. But it also aimed to sensitize them to their country's crisis and to help us understand the special concerns of young people. Some examples: the environment, Canada's peaceful role in the world, and the need for a higher degree of tolerance.

Students' Forum participants sent us over 20,000 pieces of artwork, vividly portraying their feelings for Canada. Artwork from the students was displayed in the Canadian Museum of Civilization for three weeks surrounding the release of both this report and the student report.

By 31 May 1991 we had received reports from 4,575 classes. The reports showed that 106,393 students had participated.

As with our experience with the Forum group discussion kits, we know that many classes had discussions but did not send in their reports to the Forum. Students' Forum staff surveyed principals and teachers and found that for every 10 classes that submitted reports, more than 19 others had held classroom discussions without sending in a report to the Forum. On this basis, using May 31 numbers, our best estimate of Students' Forum participation is over 13,000 Canadian classrooms, involving more than 300,000 students.

By the way, many participants in the main Forum exercise were also of school age — they came on their own, or with parents.

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Reports from the Forum and the Students' Forum were analyzed according to similar meticulous methods — but statistics and conclusions from both Forums were strictly segregated to avoid ambiguities resulting from the wide age-range of Students' Forum participants. (For details of the analytical system used in this report, see Appendix B).

*e) Other Forms of Participation*

In addition to the 75,069 Idea Line callers, the 315,000 group discussion participants, the 10,000 individual correspondents and the 300,000 Students' Forum participants, a large number of Canadians attended as spectators at Forum group discussions, in debates and conversations inspired by the Forum, or via television.

The Forum held its first televised Electronic Town Meeting in Saint John, New Brunswick, as part of the official launch of the Forum in January. It linked participants in Saint John with others in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and Yellowknife. After two ETMs in January and February, we ended in May with four shows focusing on key themes. All ETMs linked different regions, and were televised live in English and French.

Even if these TV forums, inexpensively produced and carried by a special national "Citizens' Network" on cable — did not attract huge audiences, they made a lot of citizens at home ask new questions and brought a good number of them into live discussions through the Forum's other activities.

Despite a war on the other side of the planet that threatened world peace and engaged our armed forces, the work of the Forum, and Canada's future, held a prominent place in the news during a winter and spring of discontent.

#### **4. The analysis**

Material from all these sources became part of the Forum's national data base to be examined by a team of analysts, then placed on the public record. An important distinction to make is that the Citizens' Forum was a probing consultation and dialogue — not a poll.

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Participants were not selected randomly by computer; they took part because they *wanted* to talk about their country and Canada's future. The analysts sifted through an astonishing volume of comments, using techniques sensitive to subtleties yet designed to be flexible enough to deal with a great variety of comments.

As discussion reports were arriving, the analysts coded the letters and briefs against an initial list of about 300 key words which were identified to correspond to the views citizens were expressing. This list eventually increased to more than 2,000 key words, meaning that those who took the time to participate helped to create the analysis process. All reports were read. More than 35 per cent of discussion reports were also extensively analyzed, using the key word list. Based on these results, the analysts read all of the remaining 65 per cent, noting similarities and differences and any major deviation from established trends. They also collected thousands of quotations to illustrate themes in this report.

There was a communications and advertising program as well. A series of 30-second network television spots in English and French, some using well-known professional actors volunteering their services, spurred interest and participation in the work of the Forum. When the TV spots appeared, calls to the Idea Line increased from 200-300 to more than 2,000 a day.

Forum staff prepared a working paper on its progress late in March, detailing what it had learned from citizens between January 13 and March 10. This document made front-page news, describing the groundswell of anger, disillusion and desire for change of those who had participated in the Forum. The report won the Forum respect and welcome credibility with the general public, because it demonstrated that what citizens told the Forum would be faithfully reported.

The Forum tried to be as open as possible, with the chairman and commissioners travelling to all parts of the country, sometimes singly, sometimes in blitzes of two or three. They explained the process to participants, delivered countless speeches and answered media questions, maintained the high profile of the Forum, and sat

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in on group discussions, to listen and occasionally to challenge.

One of the commissioners attended a discussion in remote Ile-à-la-Crosse, an Indian and Métis village in northern Saskatchewan. Participants sat in a circle and handed around an eagle feather to whomever wanted to speak. They talked honestly about intimate fears and aspirations and when the session ended they told the visiting commissioner, "Go and tell them."

## 5. The process

We will never know exactly how many people the Forum reached, or gauge precisely its impact on the country. But in its own way, the Forum worked.

It was an honest process. It worked because citizens themselves *wanted* it to work. Except among French-speaking Quebeckers and aboriginal peoples, the people took ownership of the process.

A few words should be said about the people who spoke to the Forum. We had excellent participation from Canadians in all parts of Canada. However, we must point out that the participation of francophone Quebeckers was lower than we hoped, and lower than would be representative of their proportion of the Canadian population. Nonetheless, the almost 45,000 Quebeckers who gave their views to the Forum (11.2 per cent of our participants overall) constitute a considerable body of opinion. It is possible that in Quebec, where the Bélanger-Campeau Commission was finishing its hearings as we were beginning, citizens may have felt less of a need for a Forum to reflect their views than elsewhere in Canada.

We were surprised at the number of sovereigntists who attended our meetings in Quebec, with questions, or to listen. They cared enough to participate; a few seemed curious to explore a bit more whether Quebec's aspirations could be accommodated within some kind of Canada.

We did not hear from as many aboriginal peoples as we would have liked, and those we did reach tended to meet in groups of their own, on their homelands. Many of them reacted to the Forum with suspicion, as

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a people who have been “commissioned-out,” with no real hope of resolving their grievances.

The Forum could easily not have succeeded. We made mistakes. At the start, commissioners fought with each other over budgets, strategy, methods and priorities, then told it all in technicolor to the media. Meshing bureaucrats, creative professionals, commissioners and volunteers was, well, challenging. We didn't have enough time. We met the usual barriers of climate and geography. Indeed to meet all together was not easy, with 11 part-time commissioners having other responsibilities.

We were reviled as spendthrifts insensitive to a people enduring recession. Without precedent, we were summoned before a parliamentary committee in mid-process to answer for high crimes...or at least high spending. We faced entrenched cynicism as suspected stooges of an unpopular government. At the start, there was massive distrust and anger directed at politicians, governments, bureaucrats and the media, and to us it seemed we had become an instant lightning rod for them all.

In the early weeks, devising as we were implementing, we faced hostile, uncomprehending media unaccustomed to the unorthodox, sometimes experimental nature of the Forum. We were criticized when the media were not allowed in some discussion groups, a citizens' right that was built into the process. Most groups were eager for the media to cover their discussions, but a few opted for intimate, private discussions. The Forum was not an easy story to cover.

The framework of the consultation process can be found in the very name of the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future. This was a fresh, unprecedented attempt to reach the Canadian grassroots and it demanded a fresh, unprecedented process to fulfil that mission.

The heart of the process, as we said, was the discussion group. Often the most moving contributions came from individuals who would normally be expected to sit silent in the back row of a large audience. Most discussions involved groups of six to two dozen people and usually lasted about three hours, though some continued over entire weekends. Many groups

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spontaneously agreed to meet again, and many more led to other groups in a natural multiplication.

In Winnipeg, a discussion at a school for the deaf was conducted entirely, and passionately, in sign language. In Ottawa, there were discussions among the blind, and among Olympic athletes. In Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, aboriginal elders from a nearby reserve joined residents at a senior citizens home for a discussion among 40 participants.

From Sioux Lookout, Ontario, a radio hook-up linked aboriginal peoples in 20 isolated communities with a phone-in discussion of Forum materials translated into Cree and Ojibway. In Vancouver, there were group discussions with street people. There were discussions among fishermen in Newfoundland, sovereigntists in Quebec, Acadians in New Brunswick, Inuit in Resolute, and even newspaper journalists.

Several TV and radio stations, and the youth specialty service, YTV, held their own on-air forums. The magazine *Canadian Living* devoted an issue to a group discussion involving people from across the country, now living in Toronto. In March, in Miami, Manitoba, an early-morning gathering of farmers, many of them facing severe financial hardship, put aside their local worries to discuss the large issues of Canada's future. Nor were more traditional sources of wisdom ignored: we had the benefit of advice from spiritual leaders, businessmen and academics, individually and through such organizations as the chambers of commerce.

The process of the Forum continued to evolve and refine itself. Citizens devised new ways to do it better. Special "Citizens' Forum Days" were declared by mayors' proclamation, the first of which engaged 472 people in Brandon, Manitoba — this inspired mayors in other cities across the country to follow "the Brandon Way." In these large sessions, sometimes including as many as 40 individual groups, participants decided to hold plenary sessions at the end where spokespersons from each table could report on discussions.

As the consultation phase drew to an end in April, train exchanges brought together groups from Ontario and Quebec commuting in special VIA Rail cars between Toronto and Montreal. Participants joined group

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discussions en route and were billeted in private homes in each city. There was a similar exchange between residents of Wainwright, Alberta, and Marieville, Quebec, and between the city of Waterloo, Ontario, and the town of Waterloo, Quebec.

The group discussions attracted everybody. They drew some lobbyists and special pleaders, of course, who quickly went beyond their own agendas to explore broader ones. But mainly the process encouraged the spontaneous and the unorganized — all the “unofficial” or “unrepresentative” people.

The intimate group format usually restrained the professional talkers. These had their say, to be sure. But by and large, the rhythm and dynamic of the group managed to contain them, defuse the obstreperous and achieve a leavening balance.

There are many stories.

Days after the official launch in New Brunswick last January, the chairman and commissioners embarked on a blitz of the Maritimes, attending group discussions in Saint John, Truro, St. Andrews, Edmunston, Sydney, Antigonish, Charlottetown, Campbellton, Fredericton, Amherst, Bridgewater, Moncton, Caraquet and Halifax. Most of the discussions worked well, but there was some misunderstanding and confusion.

Over 100 people showed up at a school auditorium for a Forum session that had been erroneously mentioned on radio as a group discussion for 15 participants. The concept of the group discussion had not yet set in the public's mind and some people assumed that they had been excluded from an official royal commission “hearing.” They were furious — not entirely to the dismay of TV reporters. Security guards were brought in for crowd control.

Fortunately, there were enough trained moderators on hand for the spillover. They led five groups to different classrooms for group discussions, some of them demanding a long walk into a stiff, cold wind to adjacent buildings. The group that remained in the auditorium insisted on having their “royal commission” say, and one by one they walked up to the stage to deliver speeches, some of which were submitted to the Forum as official briefs. Those who remained after the

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speeches formed a group discussion of their own. When it ended two hours later, everyone left for home carrying Forum kits, ready to organize more group discussions.

In Toronto, one woman volunteer tried to organize and moderate group discussions for every year of her life. Mrs. Vera Read, 74, succeeded. She moderated 77 discussions, most of them with other senior citizens in her apartment.

Early in April, in Drayton Valley, Alberta, a man came to the Forum to return his war medals, which he had brought with him. Why? Because he was now ashamed of being a Canadian, watching people tear apart the country he had fought for. His name was Les Scribner, he was 72 years old, and he remembered how a wartime French-Canadian buddy had saved his life, then later died at sea. Mr. Scribner said, "I'm glad he can't see how I have to give up being proud. Our country is a house divided, about to break up. I have come to relinquish my service emblems to this Forum. Without one Canada they have lost all their meaning." The audience of 300, in a standing ovation, insisted he keep his medals.

Rich and compelling — and important — as the discussions were, reports submitted to the Forum from them seldom caught the intensity, interplay, life, spirit and texture of the actual discussions. To capture the essence of a three-hour discussion often proved impossible in the space allotted in the report forms. As noted, we did not receive reports from all group discussions. Some participants considered the face-to-face exchange was satisfying enough — others, perhaps, thought reports a waste of time.

In general, we would have wished to have been able to devise and widely implement better ways of correcting a gross lack of information. And we would have hoped to foster even more exchange of ideas and mutual education.

Finally, we have to recognize that we did not do as good a job as we would have liked. We tried to deepen the dialogue, but apart from some excellent experiences in B.C. sharing participants' views with decision makers, mostly we could not. Time was just too short. The

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people's early need to vent their anger, our internal problems, and public scepticism stole precious weeks from the most promising part of our consultation schedule.

We must repeat an important point about our method of analysis. Our consultation embraced 400,000 people — 400,000 people who cared enough about the future of Canada to make the effort to participate. Our data were not scientifically compiled, in that the people were not randomly selected; but they were scientifically analyzed. Are the views of a random sample more useful than those of active participants in a lengthy consultation? The public must judge.

And we must acknowledge that on many issues our participants did not achieve consensus. But they were in agreement on a surprisingly large number of fundamentals. On these points of agreement and difference we have based our report.

## **6. The impact**

We have heard cries for change, as well as pleas for maintaining our hard-won reputation as a wonderful country of the world — free, orderly, tolerant, welcoming, peaceable, beautiful. And we have been told again and again that we can do better. The cry heard most often, a cry from the heart, demanded more effective involvement of ordinary Canadians in running the country. Their anger and frustration shows and it is dangerous.

The Forum acted as a catalyst, bringing people together, mixing and matching, and listening. The process served as a therapeutic exercise in airing grievances. Participants had their views jostled, undermined, confirmed and modified. Usually people emerged eager to know more about their country, distant Canadians, their neighbours and themselves. At the very least, they rediscovered the satisfaction of a good conversation.

The multi-dimensional Forum process was a movie — and an epic. The responses from Forum group discussions were not from people who answered an unexpected telephone call between the dining room and kitchen so they could respond to a questionnaire; their

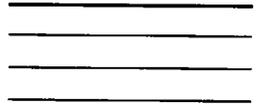
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responses came after several hours of healthy dialogue, listening, reflection, and sometimes even a bit of personal research. With all its faults and missteps, the Forum may have revitalized the art of consulting citizens on key issues affecting their lives and futures.

There have been tangible results as well, directly and indirectly, from the groundswell activated by citizens. The federal government has announced the creation of a royal commission on aboriginal affairs — long demanded before the Forum, it is true. Last month's Throne Speech said Quebec's unique character must be affirmed and the interests of the West, the Atlantic provinces, Ontario, the North and the First Nations must be recognized. It called for enabling legislation "to provide for greater participation of Canadian men and women in constitutional change." It called for "change in the way parliament does business and in the way governments conduct their affairs." And it said the time has come to overcome the acrimony, apathy and incomprehension that undermine Canada's unity.

The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future was a unique process. It emerged from creative chaos to try to help a country hoping to make sense of itself. It created great expectations, and perhaps a new thirst for dialogue. In that sense, the process *was* the report.

# Part II



## What we heard

# 1. Introduction

In this part we attempt to do justice to the hundreds of thousands of voices we heard during our work. To do full justice to the wealth of material we received would need thousands of pages. But we hope that, in this part, the Forum's contributors will recognize themselves. We will identify the common threads in what we heard across the country, and also, where appropriate, highlight the differences that exist among participants.

For ease of flow and broad understanding, this part uses no statistics in reporting citizens' views. A series of tables supporting the views expressed on major issues is presented in Appendix B.

We recognize the trust that people who participated in the Forum have placed in us, and we hope that this part of the report echoes faithfully the passion and eloquence with which they expressed their hopes and concerns for Canada.

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***"...you will not be able to report that the people don't care."***

# 2. Major issues facing Canada

The people who moderated Forum group discussions, using our discussion guide, usually began by asking participants what they felt were the major issues facing Canada in the coming years. We suggested this to be sure that our report could reflect what was truly on the minds of Canadians, rather than only what our mandate specifically asked us to explore.

From the reports of these group discussions, as well as from the letters, briefs, and phone calls we received, a number of issues emerge. Those which were raised most often are discussed in full in the sections which follow. These are:

- a) Canadian identity and values
- b) Quebec and Canadian unity
- c) Official languages
- d) Aboriginal issues
- e) Cultural diversity
- f) The Canadian economy
- g) Responsible leadership and participatory democracy

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***"We all share a deep and abiding love of Canada, and a sense of urgency that a massive healing process must begin soon."***

Many common threads run through all these issues, and they are to a large extent inseparable from each other. Issues related to leadership and democracy affect how citizens view solutions to the issues and how confident they feel about Canada's economy; concerns about accommodating diverse cultures are related to consideration of aboriginal issues, official languages, and multiculturalism policy; Canadian values, and our sense of identity, affect how citizens see problems and solutions in all areas of our society. These connections must be borne in mind as we present citizens' views on the major issues we have identified.

In general, the comments we received on the major issues facing Canada reflected a high level of concern on the part of Forum participants. The anxiety surrounding both the importance of resolving these issues, and the likelihood political leadership could be trusted to find appropriate solutions, was often palpable. The Canadians who spoke to the Forum want their leaders to be aware of their concerns, and to understand their messages about how to deal with them — messages often rooted in very deep-seated and treasured Canadian values.

### **3. Canadian identity and values**

Citizens who spoke to the Forum have focused a great deal on what it means to them to be Canadians. In doing so, they have articulated a sense of Canadian identity and a set of fundamental Canadian values by which they believe we should be governed — as individuals as well as politically and institutionally. Some of these values were expressed to us as indigenous Canadian traits; others were articulated as participants compared themselves to our American neighbours — in a comparative sense, we are “more this” and “less that” than Americans. However their values and sense of identity was expressed, it is clear that Forum participants have a strong sense of a distinct Canadian identity which sets us apart as a people not just from Americans but from any other country as well. This section will report on our uniqueness, as seen by the Canadians who spoke to us.

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***“These are...values  
that can make  
Canada distinctive  
and meaningful.”***

## **Canadian Values**

Many Canadians spoke or wrote eloquently to the Forum on the subject of the core values they see as essential elements of Canadian society. Some emphasized one or two; others presented a comprehensive picture of the society they believe we should aspire to, as with the participant who said, "*Peace, order and good government are no longer appropriate values for Canada. Civil and social equality, respect for differences, the pursuit of peace, environmental respect, and world citizenship are more suitable values for contemporary and future Canada. These are values that people can espouse and pursue regardless of region, language, culture, economic circumstance, social status, and values that can make Canada distinctive and meaningful.*" A number of participants spoke to us specifically about the importance of shared values in building a nation: "*Canada is indeed viable and very much worth preserving in new forms and with confirmed common values. We can become, for the rest of the world and for ourselves, a model of a linguistically and culturally diverse society functioning in harmony.*"

The following represent the list of core values which emerged very strongly, from participants in all regions of Canada, as essential elements of Canadian society:

### **a) Belief in Equality and Fairness in a Democratic Society**

One of the strongest messages coming from contributors is their belief in the need for equality and fairness as guiding principles for our society.

A group in Newfoundland told us: "*We believe that most Canadians want a society that...protects national interests while remaining responsive, and accountable, to individual rights...protects freedom, so that individuals can live their lives in the manner of their choice, so long as they do not infringe on the rights of others...protects the rights of all Canadians to fair and equal treatment: women, ethnic minorities, different linguistic groups, aboriginal peoples, various religions, etc...*"

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***"We can become...a model of a linguistically and culturally diverse society functioning in harmony."***

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***"My hope for the future of Canada is for...a country ...where each person recognizes they have the same opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges."***

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***“The rights of the minority must be heard and the vote of the majority rules.”***

The balance of individual freedom and fairness to groups whose rights also need protection must, participants tell us, be carefully maintained. Equality and fairness are not incompatible with tolerance and accommodation; on the contrary, as a British Columbian said to us, *“My hope for the future of Canada is for...a country where people feel comfortable with one another, are tolerant and understanding with one another, and where each person recognizes they have the same opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges.”* Some participants feel the balance between the rights of individuals and those of groups has tilted in favour of protecting the rights of minority groups. A group in Ontario told us: *“We value freedom of religion...we respect other peoples’ culture but do not want their background pushed on us, i.e. RCMP uniforms.”* Another, in Manitoba, said: *“The rights of the minority must be heard and the vote of the majority rules.”*

The belief in fair treatment of all our citizens is especially apparent in discussions on aboriginal issues. Over and over, participants said our treatment of aboriginal peoples has been unfair, and it is this unfairness — in contravention of one of our fundamental principles — which brings Forum participants to near-unanimous conclusions that these past injustices must be remedied. *“Natives have been treated unfairly in the past, assimilation is no answer,”* a group in Ontario told us. Another group, in Penticton, B.C., along with many others across the country, agreed: *“The group felt aboriginal peoples had not been fairly treated...”*

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***“We will not stand for any province demanding more than equal treatment.”***

Fairness and equality extend, for citizens who spoke to us, beyond the level of individuals and groups in society to encompass provinces. This is discussed in more detail in the section of this part concerning Quebec and Canadian unity, but is worth noting here because of the extent to which participants are guided by this fundamental value in considering how Quebec’s aspirations might be addressed within the context of a fair and equal federation. *“We will not stand for any province demanding any more than equal treatment,”* said a group in New Brunswick, capturing the view of the vast majority of participants on this issue.

The citizens who spoke to the Forum are aware of the importance of having a democratic society, and value it deeply. One participant, from Ontario, defined Canadian democracy in this way: *“Democracy means a continual consensus of the people of Canada; a dialogue among all her people so that we may get to know each other as best we can in a personal matter...We must find the equality of mankind in our daily lives through forgiveness and understanding. We have not given up yet and must apply our collective intelligence to find solutions and not create more problems.”*

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***“We must find the equality of mankind in our daily lives...”***

### ***b) Belief in Consultation and Dialogue***

Related to our view of ourselves as people who settle their differences peaceably and in a consultative rather than confrontational manner, there is a great belief in consultation and dialogue as means of reaching consensual settlements of major issues. This does not just apply to governments as a *modus operandi*; Forum participants also believe that many of the country’s difficulties could be reduced or eliminated through more and better dialogue among citizens. Lamenting the lack of dialogue between French- and English-speaking Canadians, a student in Ottawa said, *“We put bars up and we say this is a culture, and that is a culture. Do we think that because we put up barriers we are different from people on the other side?”*

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***“Do we think that because we put up barriers we are different from people on the other side?”***

The view is widely held that all Canadians must work together in solving our problems, and that communications must be improved among Canadians, to remedy the apparent lack of understanding that exists among different groups, regions, or provinces. This view is even more strongly expressed among Students’ Forum participants than among their adult counterparts, and many young people wanted to see a more harmonious country than we have at the moment. A junior high school student in Manitoba said, *“If ten years from now a visitor from another country came to Canada and I had to say what I thought my country was famous for, I would like to say...‘I think Canada is famous for its peace with itself and others.’”*

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***“I would like to say...Canada is famous for its peace with itself and others.”***

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***“...the government subsidized my high school trip to Quebec...I went back home and learned French.”***

In this regard, we heard from a considerable number of adults and students that there should be much improved programs of exchange among Canadians of all regions and all ages. In particular, Students' Forum participants have a very strong belief in consultation and dialogue as means for resolving differences, and were very supportive of improved opportunities for exchange. A petition with 3,982 signatories aged 11 to 19 (with a small number of parents and teachers included) from the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC) urged that there be exchanges among young Canadians, that they learn each other's language and discover each other's culture, to develop respect, understanding and tolerance. Others echoed the same view:

*“It's really important to have exchange programs because the best time to learn a language is when you're young. And it is two different cultures. After you've been here a while you start talking to yourself in French and having dreams in French...” (Vancouver exchange student, age 16, in Quebec City)*

*“When I was a kid, the government subsidized my high school trip to Quebec. I'd never been out of province. It was like going to Italy. I went back home and learned French. I still have those friends I made there. Isn't that what we want from this country?” (Former Newfoundlander living in Toronto)*

Another view that was expressed repeatedly and strongly was that not enough has been done to improve our education and understanding of one another. Citizens told us countless times about their lack of knowledge and reliable information about their history, their country, and their fellow citizens in different regions or of different cultural groups. Both the education system and the media took considerable criticism from participants in this respect.

In discussing such issues as Quebec's place in confederation, our history and political system, or the settlement of aboriginal issues, participants often faulted the education system for failing to equip them with sufficient understanding of our history and cultural evolu-

tion. *"Our schoolbooks and videos don't recognize the different contributions of different ethnic groups,"* a group in Toronto told us. *"I am dismayed at the lack of knowledge of our history that many of our teenagers have,"* said another participant. *"How can people have a pride in and/or loyalty to something they know very little about?"* Students, as well, indicated that greater attention should be paid to these areas. Participants, especially outside Quebec, often expressed a desire to see either a national curriculum in Canadian history, or national standards in education more generally, as the group in Haileybury, Ontario, which told us: (there should be) *"...one standard of education for Canada as a whole — one public school system stressing patriotism, moral civil rights & tolerance of others of different racial entity."* A caller to the Forum's 1-800 line echoed the views of many in saying, *"Citizenship should become a core subject in our schools. Canadian traditions should be cherished and perpetuated."*

There were also many protests against funding reductions in areas which could promote better understanding. The former Katimavik program was held up as an example: *"Few Canadians have experienced Canada coast to coast, and so many Canadians don't comprehend the different cultures found within Canada. Katimavik would be a start,"* we heard from a resident of the Yukon. Exchanges among provinces and regions, and especially between Quebec and other parts of Canada, were often suggested as ways to improve our understanding of each other; such exchanges could be either government-sponsored or privately-initiated, as with the amateur sports programs which bring young Canadians from one part of the country to another: *"Hockey unites Canada,"* a caller to the 1-800 line told us. *"At tournaments, we disregard our differences. Therefore, have provincial teams meet every year in a tournament to promote national unity..."*

In general, there was a great deal of recognition that we don't know enough about ourselves and each other as Canadians, and that improved knowledge is one of the few paths to better understanding and consensual problem-solving. As a participant at the Whitehorse Town Hall Meeting, who identified himself

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***"How can people have a pride in and/or loyalty to something they know very little about?"***

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***"Citizenship should become a core subject in our schools."***

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***"Hockey unites Canada."***

as an aboriginal Canadian, put it, "*Perhaps when mainstream Canadians take some responsibility for rewriting the history books of this country so that we're included and so that everything...that we've contributed to Canada is reflected, then perhaps people will begin to understand that we aren't a problem, we're people. And we have a rich history and good traditions and values.*" The same desire for knowledge of ourselves was echoed by Canadians of all other regions and backgrounds.

### **c) Importance of Accommodation and Tolerance**

Forum participants recognize the existence of different groups in our society and their need to sustain their own cultures while attaching themselves to the country's society, values, and institutions. As well, they acknowledge the existence of various legitimate competing regional and cultural interests in Canada. Moreover, they explicitly support the view that Canadians should strive to be accommodating and tolerant of all various groups and regions — as long as these latter demonstrate their own acceptance of accommodation and tolerance as key values.

Accommodating aboriginal peoples' aspirations for greater self-determination and Canada's overall ethnic and cultural diversity are the primary expressions of this value: one participant in Manitoba told us that, "*The Aboriginal People are willing to be Canadians, accept the Canadian Flag, but want equal rights, run their own affairs and educate their own people, also have representation in Ottawa, and be treated like other Canadians, with respect for their own languages as well as English. What's wrong with that? They are as concerned about Canada as we are and moreso, as they were here first*"; another, in New Brunswick, said, "*Support for diversity should not be taken as support for multicultural ghettos...Equality of person, equality of opportunity and equality of result should all operate within the framework of respect for diversity.*"

A great number of participants, in Quebec as well as elsewhere, wish for a greater degree of tolerance and accommodation for the two major language groups and for the aspirations of different provinces and regions,

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***"Equality of person, equality of opportunity and equality of result should all operate within the framework of respect for diversity."***

including Quebec. Measures to improve understanding among these areas is often recommended as a step toward such increased tolerance, as was expressed by a number of the participants in a Forum-organized exchange — return travel supplied by Canadian Airlines International — between the residents of Marievalle, Quebec, and Wainwright, Alberta. A Wainwright resident who travelled to Marievalle put it very bluntly in saying, *“We think a law should be passed to get everyone to travel to Quebec. It’s easy to fear what you don’t know, but you can’t fear a smiling face or a handshake...These people need the rest of Canada to respect them and lift them up a little bit. I think we can do that without diminishing ourselves.”*

#### **d) Support for Diversity**

Forum participants have repeatedly emphasized Canada’s diversity as one of the most important things they value about this country. This diversity has a number of facets: linguistic, regional, ethnic, and cultural differences are all embraced and celebrated by most of the people who spoke to the Forum. Although many people believe that Canada would continue to be a distinct nation if Quebec were no longer part of the federation, there is considerable appreciation of the addition to our distinctiveness that is brought by the French language and culture.

As well, participants recognize the contribution brought by Canadians of other than French or English origin. The aboriginal peoples, and the fact that they were the original inhabitants of this land, is widely recognized: *“If anyone is distinct, it is Canada’s native peoples,”* said a participant in Manitoba. The fact that Canada is a nation of immigrants is recognized and celebrated; however, as is discussed in the section of this part dealing with cultural diversity, there is considerable opposition to the continued use of public funds to support heritage language and culture programs. Achieving balance between an evolving multicultural Canada and a secure sense of Canadian identity provoked much discussion among contributors and resulted in comments such as that from the Ontario participant who said, *“Ethnic and cultural diversity is an attractive embroi-*

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*“It’s easy to fear what you don’t know, but you can’t fear a smiling face...”*

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*“Ethnic and cultural diversity is an attractive embroidery on our national fabric, but...if we really want a country, we must be Canadians first.”*

dery on our national fabric, but the embroidery must not become so rich that the fabric itself is obscured and its strength damaged by too many needle pricks. If we really want a country, we must be Canadians first."

**e) Compassion and Generosity**

Forum participants deeply value Canada's compassionate and generous character, as exemplified by our universal and extensive social services, our health care system, our pensions, our willingness to welcome refugees, and our commitment to regional economic equalization. These attributes are most definitely seen as part of Canada's distinct character, and are, accordingly, to be treated with respect by those whose mandate is to enhance them.

A brief from the United Church of Canada sums up much of the attitude of Forum participants' toward our treatment of others in the statement: *"The fundamental ethical assumption has been stated repeatedly: all people have the right to lay a claim on the rest of us to ensure that their entitlement to the common good is met."*

A participant in Ontario expressed the same sentiment in terms of its meaning for the country: *"One of our unique Canadian attributes has been a stronger commitment to the good of the many (in other words, the good of the community and the extended community) as compared to the good of the individual in his (and less frequently her) relentless climb to the top of the heap. This sense of community...has been a strong force in creating a more humane face for Canada."*

**f) Attachment to Canada's Natural Beauty**

While the North has long been part of Canadian myth and legend, participants indicated that Canada's unspoiled natural beauty is a matter of great importance to them, and is in their view threatened by inadequate attention to protecting our environment.

*"All Canadians love the land,"* a participant from Thamesville, Ontario, told us. *"Maybe we learned that from the first Canadians, our Native people. They and we have always longed for it, defended it, and praised*

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**"...all people have the right to lay a claim on the rest of us..."**

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**"All Canadians love the land."**

*it in song, art, and story. We are now the Guardians of the final wilderness left on earth, and we take that responsibility seriously."*

Over half the discussion groups who reported to the Forum identified the environment as a major issue for the country. While we were not a commission on the environment, it is clear that the Canadians who spoke to the Forum wish to have their concern signalled very strongly to governments at all levels. A Forum group in Nova Scotia captured the views of a great many participants in saying: *"The beauty of our country...must be preserved through stricter laws regarding pollution and other environmental hazards."* For many people, the environment was the top priority; in the words of another participant, *"Failure to attend to this problem constructively and immediately will make all else of little concern very soon."* Forum participants recognize their individual responsibilities in environmental protection, but would like to see considerably more assurances that Canadian governments are taking the issue as seriously as are Canadian citizens. A group in Mill Bay, B.C., told us: *"...the average Canadian is willing to work towards a cleaner and better environment but our government must show a greater concern, too. They must introduce legislation with 'teeth'...There must be more education regarding this matter and action — not just words."*

The environment was also a matter of very serious concern for Canadian youth who participated in the Students' Forum. Our natural beauty is, for our younger children, one of the positive attributes they most commonly attach to Canada. Older students often made suggestions for ways to protect the environment: *"It's not right that only big cities have places for recycling paper and metal,"* (tr.) said a senior high school student in Quebec. *"We would like kids to talk to other people about the rain forests, starting to recycle, decrease the mills, and stop polluting the air,"* we heard from a group of junior high school students in Cornwall, Ontario. *"...we can't leave it up to another person, we all have to pitch in and help,"* said a junior high school

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***"The beauty of our country...must be preserved through stricter laws regarding pollution..."***

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***"...government must show a greater concern, too."***

student in Coquitlam, B.C. *"It is everyone's responsibility to help out and keep our earth clean, after all there is only one earth."*

**g) *Our World Image: Commitment to Freedom, Peace and Non-Violent Change***

Our view of ourselves, and the world's view of us, as a free, peaceable, non-violent people is of great importance to Forum participants. They express substantial support for non-violence and for Canada's historical role as an international peacekeeper.

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***"We should be the same kind of Canada that we have always been, a peaceful and quiet nation."***

A group of Canadians living in Lagos, Nigeria, provided the comment: *"Canadians are generally respected throughout the world. Their values and ideals are reflected in their international policies and activities and are internationally praised and often warmly appreciated."* A caller to the 1-800 line said, *"Canada should not try to be a world power like the USA. We should be the same kind of Canada that we have always been, a peaceful and quiet nation."* Often, participants reflected their deepest attachment to the country in talking about how it is perceived from outside. *"How can you not be optimistic about living in a country that is the envy of the entire world?"* we heard from Hinton, Alberta. *"To me, Canada is a nation with a conscience, a country that millions of people throughout the world dream of becoming part of. It seems incomprehensible that some Canadians are dreaming of its destruction."*

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***"...one of the only countries in the world where you can still dream dreams...and they can still come true."***

Our strong national commitment to peace and non-violent change was captured by the participant in British Columbia who said, *"...such activities as inciting to or participating in riot, rebellion, armed and unarmed blockades and other resorts to violence...have no rightful place in Canada. In my opinion, if the law and order and democratic processes which used to be so characteristic of Canada are to be restored and strengthened, all resort to anarchy and violence must be outlawed."*

Our participants, especially new Canadians, deeply value the freedom which Canadian citizens enjoy, and wish to see it protected. A participant in Willowdale, Ontario told us, *"a Canadian is a person, regardless of ethnic origin, who...feels free to develop in his or her*

*own, individual way.” Another participant, in Alberta, told us Canada is, for him, “...one of the only countries in the world where you can still dream dreams...and they can still come true.”*

### ***Unifying Institutions***

The funding cutbacks in recent years to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and VIA Rail were raised over and over by many participants as heavily symbolic of lack of sensitivity to national symbols. Together with changes in the RCMP uniform and, less frequently, reductions in service by Canada Post, indicate to participants that, while on the one hand, approaches which are seen as divisive (especially funding of multicultural programs and official language policy) are pursued, on the other hand government has been neglecting or actively damaging those institutions which could contribute to Canadian unity.

A participant in a group discussion in Toronto said, *“My country is being taken away from me. I see cutbacks in the communications that this country needs to talk to itself. CBC is dying, VIA Rail is dying, and we’re talking about putting cultural issues on the bargaining table with Mexico.”* Some urged a stronger emphasis on Canadian cultural expression: *“Is it any wonder our citizens aren’t sure who they are or what sort of country they want? They have been consuming a largely foreign diet on television and in cinema for at least 50 years.”* Others linked apparently endangered national programs and institutions with the further threat they felt would be posed by a new division of powers between the provinces and the federal government: *“The shared programs, everything from transfer payments between the provinces to medicare and the CBC, are very important to Canada. Who will apply the mechanisms that keep us together if autonomy is granted to the provinces or regions?”* From Saskatchewan, in particular, we heard about the symbolic damage of reductions in Canada Post services: *“The Post Office is the only Federal presence in our community. We need ties to hold this country of ours together. A Federal Postal system should be one of those ties.”*

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***“My country is being taken away from me.”***

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***“The shared programs, everything from transfer payments between the provinces to medicare and the CBC, are very important to Canada.”***

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**"Canadian unity has suffered almost irreparable damage from the policies of the present government."**

The practical importance of transportation and communications in holding Canada together was also raised: "*(Communication and transportation were) recognized as a matter of essential importance in 1867...Rail, road and air transportation should be developed so that physical links across the nation for the transport of goods and for passenger travel and tourism may be maintained at a reasonable cost,*" said one participant. Said another, "*Canadian unity has suffered almost irreparable damage from the policies of the present government. Our national rail system brought us together as a nation and was meant to keep us together as a nation. With its cancellation many areas are totally isolated.*"

Many of our citizens are also asking for some visible pride in what they view as a wonderful country. "*It was not very long ago that I held a long standing opinion of the Americans as embarrassingly boastful,*" said one contributor. "*They waved their flag at the seemingly least provocation, and I watched as a tongue clucking, modest, reserved Canadian. I don't feel this way about them any more. I applaud their open and unreserved expressions of pride in their country. They have much to teach us about national identity and pride and it is time we stopped blushing and started to vigorously wave our own flag.*"

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**"It is time we stopped blushing and started to vigorously wave our own flag."**

In the view of a great many participants, unity will not come from government programs to promote it; it will stem from our people themselves as we discover our commonalities, our shared history, what we've built together, and how much our ambitions and aspirations, for our families or for the country we live in, are shared by the others who inhabit this land. The Forum's participants are asking their governments to make this sharing among citizens possible.

### ***Regionalism***

The forces of regionalism in Canada have often been portrayed as stronger than, and detrimental to, the forces of unity. Whether this has been true in the past, it is not the case in 1991 for the vast majority of participants — outside Quebec. While their attachment to their provinces or regions is strong, their attachment to

Canada is clearly stronger, and they have placed very little emphasis on strengthening regions at the expense of the country as a whole.

In fact, the desire of the majority of participants outside Quebec is for a strong central government which will act with resolution to remedy the country's economic ills, help to unify its citizens, and reduce the level of division and discord among groups or regions. *"We need a strong central government, one that sees the common good rather than all the little regional differences,"* we heard from New Brunswick. From Ontario, the same message: *"It would be a serious mistake to weaken any of Ottawa's existing powers without full consideration being given to all the ramifications...federal powers must not be lessened, rather, if possible they should be strengthened and even broadened."* And from British Columbia: *"Canada is a vast land covering diverse geographic and ethnic regions. Some regionalism must therefore be accommodated. However, the same factors suggest a need for a strong central government."*

It is clear to us, in listening to participants, that they have lost faith in the political system as it currently operates (as discussed in more detail in section 9 of this part of the report). But this does not mean they want to strip the federal government of its powers and rely on other levels of government to set standards and funding levels for essential programs or services. On the contrary, the expressed wish for universal accessibility and national standards in areas such as health care and, for many participants, education, require that the central government play a key role.

This is not to suggest that regions outside Ontario and Quebec do not continue to feel ignored in decision making and cut off from the sources of political power. A letter from Alberta expresses the continuing awareness of and dissatisfaction with Canadian geopolitics: *"The fact is that the overwhelming population of Ontario and Quebec means that any party that aspires to govern Canada must win the majority of seats in either Ontario or Quebec or both provinces. To do that it must have policies that answer the needs of those provinces which are frequently at the expense of the citizens*

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***"We need a strong central government..."***

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***"...federal powers must not be lessened, rather, if possible they should be strengthened and even broadened."***

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***"The problem of the North being ignored has been there for a long time."***

of outer Canada.” In Fort Smith, NWT, we heard, “The problem of the North being ignored has been there for a long time.”

One vehicle often mentioned, in all regions (although less often in Quebec than elsewhere), to achieve better representation of all Canadian voices regions is a reformed Senate: “...on the question of the Senate I would like to see it reformed as a house of regional representation,” said a participant in Ontario. (Senate reform is discussed in more detail in section 9 of this part).

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**“Set up a constituent assembly independent of government...”**

Another suggestion we heard, although less often, was for a constituent assembly to deal with constitutional reform: a Nova Scotia participant said, “Set up a constituent assembly independent of government, with equitable representation from each province (or region) and territory, and from aboriginal groups. I think such an assembly would be better able to work on constitutional matters, and I hope, more clearly express what we as Canadians want for our country.”

A minority of participants favoured greater decentralization of the powers of the federal government: in the words of one group discussion report from British Columbia: “A loose federation of provinces would satisfy our particular needs. We still need a federal government for certain needs but avoiding the present overlap (wasteful).” To address these concerns, however, most participants focused on reform of federal institutions and processes, rather than decentralization of power or weakening the central government.

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**“We still need a federal government for certain needs but avoiding the present overlap (wasteful).”**

In our consultations, for the most part regional interests did not come first for participants. A report of a group discussion in Alberta described how the group saw the situation: “An overall concern for the welfare of Canada seemed to take precedence over any discussion on regional interests. Participants felt that in spite of the uniqueness of any particular region, that Canada is itself viewed internationally as being very distinct. We felt that although Quebec contributes significantly to that distinction, that many other regions contribute equally to our overall identity.” This view was shared by the participant in Newfoundland who said, “I do not see any conflict between having a strong national cul-

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**“I do not see any conflict between having a strong national culture and strong regional cultures...”**

ture and strong regional cultures — it is false thinking to make the distinction between these, for the two exist in a complementary way and have a symbiotic relationship. Strong regional cultures make for a strong nation (but) we certainly need to strengthen our ways of meeting with and speaking to each other across the different regions and for this we need effective systems of transportation and communication.”

Certainly, Canada’s different regions are appreciated as contributing to our distinctiveness, and our citizens value their regional affiliations deeply. It is clear to us, however, that the sense of attachment to Canada felt by citizens outside Quebec far outweighs their regional attachments. Within Quebec, this sense of attachment to Canada is much less strong. As we were told by a self-declared Montreal sovereigntist who reflected the majority of francophone participants in Quebec, *“Being Canadian is just something that’s on my passport...There’s nothing emotional about it.”* A minority of Quebec francophone participants told us of the value they saw in remaining attached to Canada: *“The anglophones, too close to the American giant, need us like we need them to develop this country on a continental scale...It is time for Quebecers to renounce their adolescent revolt and to rejoin the Canadian nation of which they were one of the founding peoples and are now equal partners.”* Within Quebec we also found a considerable degree of attachment to the values described in this section, and a similar set of social and economic aspirations as in the rest of Canada. The measures suggested by many participants to increase dialogue and understanding between Quebec and the rest of Canada stem in large measure from the sense that the discovery of these common aspirations and values could do much to diminish the distance that Quebecers and other Canadians currently feel from each other.

These values and aspirations were generally summarized by the submission from a citizen in Moncton, New Brunswick, whose vision of Canada is *“A country where language is not an issue, it is a fact, and an enjoyable cultural distinction...open immigration attitude and policy. A democratic country that listens to its citizens...It is part fond memory of a time past, it is part*

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***“Being Canadian is just something that’s on my passport...There’s nothing emotional about it.”***

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***“A country where language is not an issue, it is a fact, and an enjoyable cultural distinction...A democratic country that listens to its citizens...”***

wishful thinking, but it is a goal to achieve nonetheless...a fair and generous country. A tolerant country, a prosperous country, a civilized country.”

We leave the last word on Canada’s identity and fundamental values to a citizen from Braeside, Ontario:

*“We are for humility, equality and tolerance. Our diversified backgrounds are full of painfully gained wisdom and humility. We are the ‘quiet Americans.’ Consisting of minorities we try and mostly succeed in living together in harmony, albeit not without problems. We have an ever developing culture based on an adopted mix of past riches from countless sources: continents, countries, ethnic groups, tribes and individuals. Most of the world can describe us better than we can describe ourselves. This is perhaps because to re-define our identity over and over IS a part of our identity. Painful at times but perhaps the better for it. We can not simply take one of our minority groups, however strong or noisy, declare it superior and set up legislative and socio-economical mechanisms to re-make the entire population to compliance with its culture. Culture, by definition, is the ‘customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.’ Identity, by definition again, is ‘sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing.’ O yes, Canadians have an identity. Part of it must be our belief that we all have an equal right to be different.”*

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**“O yes, Canadians have an identity. Part of it must be our belief that we all have an equal right to be different.”**

Despite sharing many of the same values and aspirations, Canadians bring many different approaches to their consideration of the future. These similarities and differences will be explored in the following sections.

#### **4. Quebec and Canadian unity**

In 1965, 26 years ago, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism warned that Canada was passing through the greatest crisis in its history. Twelve years ago, in 1979, the Task Force on Canadian Unity

(Pepin-Robarts) recalled this warning, and issued another, that Canada had moved to an even graver and more critical stage in its history.

The Pepin-Robarts group also acknowledged in 1979 that “even crises can become tedious and difficult to believe in if they go on too long and if nothing seems to happen.” Through the winter and spring of 1991, we found the truth of this statement: the continuing series of crises has become tedious for many Canadians, and there is a measure of disbelief that, even now, change is imminent and may be damaging and disruptive.

But we also heard that many more Canadians believe that the time for warnings is past: action must be taken to end the series of crises we have lived through as a country, and a definitive solution is not only desirable but essential.

As with so many of the issues about which Canadians spoke to the Forum, we cannot separate views on Quebec and its place in confederation from views in a number of other areas, especially provincial equality, bilingualism, responsible leadership, and the process of constitutional reform. These areas are separately treated in this report, but they should not be regarded as distinct from one another; while they are complex issues in themselves, there are important aspects of each which are linked to the question of the future partnership between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Bilingualism is perceived by many to represent a major effort on the part of English-speaking Canada to make Quebec feel at home in confederation, and Quebec’s language laws are regarded as a complete — even contemptuous — rejection of this effort.

These same laws are seen outside Quebec as an affront to deeply-held values of individual liberty and freedom of expression, as in the view of a group discussion participant who said, “A country that cannot guarantee equal rights to a citizen, whether from Lac St-Jean or Windsor, Matane or Vancouver, is not worth having.” Linking this with equally deeply-held views on provincial equality, there seems in the minds of many to be even less reason to negotiate a special status for Quebec — making it more “equal” than others

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***“A country that cannot guarantee equal rights to a citizen, whether from Lac St-Jean or Windsor, Matane or Vancouver, is not worth having.”***

— when it is seen to have made its citizens less equal than other Canadians. As a result, when the country's political leaders negotiated an agreement which apparently would have given Quebec a preferred status, many participants reacted with great anger to what they saw as a failure on the part of these leaders to govern in accordance with fundamental Canadian values.

Within Quebec, the interpretation of other Canadians' views on the failure of the Meech Lake accord, and of Quebecers' current place in the hearts of other Canadians, is very different from the views we heard expressed from Canadians outside Quebec. For the most part, the failure of the Meech Lake accord has been portrayed in the media and elsewhere as an explicit rejection by the rest of Canada of Quebec's minimum demands. There is a widespread conclusion among our Quebec participants that, if the minimum has been rejected, no future hope remains for a renewed federalism which could be acceptable to Quebec: "...if English Canadians couldn't accept the minuscule and defensive provisions of Meech, how will they accept a substantial change in the current Constitution?" one Quebecker asked, echoing the question of many others. A group discussion in Quebec reflected the widespread view in that province that the rejection of Meech Lake was a slap in the face to Quebec and its people: "*It is clear that the rest of Canada doesn't want us: it is therefore the time for us to affirm ourselves.*" (tr.)

Nonetheless, despite the anger which was expressed about the behaviour of Canada's leaders in these negotiations, and despite a widespread belief among Canadians outside Quebec that the province had been confederation's favoured child for long enough, we have found much hope among participants that a way can be found to keep Quebec as part of the Canadian family. A resident of Saint John, New Brunswick, said, "*I do not want separation, as my good French Canadian wife said, with tears in her eyes, 'don't tell me that I'll need a passport to go see my family.'*" A group discussion in North York, Ontario, reported that, "*The very first thing said was there needs to be a movement away from the idea of treating Quebec as separable from Canada. We are one nation, not two.*"

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**"...If English Canadians couldn't accept the minuscule and defensive provisions of Meech, how will they accept a substantial change in the current Constitution?"**

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**"...there needs to be a movement away from the idea of treating Quebec as separable from Canada. We are one nation, not two."**

The group went on to highlight one of the essential divergences in recognizing the aspirations of Quebecers and other Canadians in saying, *“Quebec is a distinct society within the nation, but so are many other parts of Canada. That society is in terms of culture, language, etc, but not in terms of rights or responsibilities.”*

For most participants outside Quebec, Quebec’s continued presence in confederation cannot be bought at the price of damaging or destroying those things they value most about the country, and in particular, must not be bought by sacrificing individual or provincial equality. This message could not be more clear from the Canadians who spoke to the Forum. The result is a willingness to talk, to try to reach an accommodation, but without a firm conviction that one can be found.

At the end of the day, Forum participants outside Quebec recognize the very real possibility of Quebec separation, and regret deeply that an important part of the country may be lost. But if that is the price to be paid for having a country left which they can value, they are willing to pay it: from British Columbia, *“This submission comes from a Canadian who would prefer to live harmoniously beside a friendly, foreign Quebec rather than a disgruntled, reluctant province. This Canadian does not believe that separation would result in disintegration of the rest of Canada.”* Another expressed the common desire to see an end, once and for all, to the series of crises, and move on to other issues: *“Is it not time to decolonize Quebec and set it free? Certainly there will be some turmoil, but Canada can then get on with development and international integration instead of in-fighting over constitutional issues.”* A group in Etobicoke, Ontario: *“We have to be prepared to let Quebec separate in order to preserve these things that we like about Canada if Quebec is not prepared to accept them; these benefits come with taxation (good social programs, education, etc.) and we are prepared to be burdened in order to have them.”*

From participants inside Quebec, we see a calm sense that more discussion will take place, but the outcome will be acceptable to them. As a society their aspirations are seen as achievable, their needs are clear,

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***“Quebec is a distinct society within the nation...in terms of culture, language, etc, but not in terms of rights or responsibilities.”***

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***“...This Canadian does not believe that separation would result in disintegration of the rest of Canada.”***

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***“...let Quebec separate in order to preserve these things that we like about Canada if Quebec is not prepared to accept them...”***

and they will no longer accept any arrangement which does not meet their fundamental requirements. One group discussion among francophones in Quebec pointed out what they saw as a basic obstacle to reconciliation with the rest of Canada: "*Canada can't be saved. From the beginning, there has been a difference of perception — Quebec sees itself as 1/2, Canada sees it as 1/10.*"(tr.) On the same theme, the group said: "*Quebec's future must not be decided in Newfoundland, or in Manitoba...Quebec is not a region, it is a nation.*"(tr.)

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**"...Quebec is not a region, it is a nation."**

We heard some expression, among francophone Quebecers, of hope that a way can be found to remain part of Canada: "*We are proud to be Canadians of French expression, and want to remain that way,*" one group told us, going on to say: "*When Europe is in the process of unification, when the barriers are dropping in the Eastern Bloc countries, the possibility of seeing our country fragmenting strikes us as illogical.*" However, the majority view among Quebec francophones who spoke to us is captured by the participant who said, "*Canadian federalism is a failure...among the different alternatives now available to Quebec, moving to sovereignty seems to us to be the most welcome.*"(tr.)

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**"Canadian federalism is a failure..."**

### ***Quebec: A Culturally Distinct Member of the Canadian Family***

Much of the negative popular reaction to the Meech Lake accord has been attributed, in the media and elsewhere, to citizens outside Quebec refusing to acknowledge Quebec as a distinct society. In fact, those Canadians who spoke to the Forum, many of whom held very negative views of the accord, do so primarily either because of the constitutional reform process or because of what they viewed as the granting of special privileges to Quebec that would be denied to other provinces. Forum participants are very often quite willing to recognize Quebec's cultural and linguistic distinctiveness; what they cannot accept is that the provincial government of Quebec should have special powers

deriving from this cultural distinctiveness that would have the effect of creating two different definitions of the rights and obligations of Canadian citizenship.

The insistence on equal status as a pre-condition for Quebec's membership in the Canadian family does not derive from a lack of acceptance of Quebec's special nature. There is considerable acknowledgement among our participants of the distinct linguistic and cultural characteristics of Quebec society. An Ontarian said in an individual report following a group discussion, *"Most people I talk to do not want a divided country. Nor do they deny the right of Quebecois to preserve their language and culture."* Another participant said, *"Quebec's language and culture must be recognized as making it a distinct society."*

The presence of the French fact in Canada, represented in large measure by Quebec, is viewed by many participants as one of our country's distinct characteristics, and those who appreciate it most deeply are also often the most saddened at the prospect of losing Quebec as a part of the country. A British Columbian urged the strengthening of this distinct Canadian fact through the education system: *"So, make it mandatory that all Canadians at least learn English and French well, really well. So that we can understand the humour of each other, our plays, our books, our different cultures in general. How proud we would be, to be different from the Americans. How much more fun we would have to be able to listen to each other's nonsense. And sense. How really Canadian we would be."* From a senior student in Camrose, Alberta, we heard: *"Having two languages doesn't split up the country, it MAKES it."* *"Quebec is part of this great nation,"* said a writer from Ontario. *"...Without Quebec and their French language I would feel lost as a Canadian."* Said another, *"The separation of Quebec from Canada in any form would be a great loss. Quebecers should somehow be made aware of all the positive reasons for their remaining in Canada, they are sincerely wanted as members of the Canadian family."* A Nova Scotian told us, *"I could no more imagine Canada without Quebec than I could Nova Scotia without Cape Breton. Quebec is a big part of my cultural soul as a Canadian."*

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***"Quebec's language and culture must be recognized as making it a distinct society."***

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***"...Without Quebec and their French language I would feel lost as a Canadian."***

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***“Quebec is protected to some degree by thirty million Canadians. Separate, it will be isolated, drowned...”***

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***“Quebec with its unique language and culture is what makes Canada different. We must not lose this...”***

A number of participants outside Quebec feel that Canada represents the province's best hope for cultural survival: *“Quebec would not survive many generations. Surrounded by Americans, the French language and culture would die and Quebec would be one more American state,”* said a participant in Ontario; a group in Nova Scotia told us, in French: (Quebec's challenge is to) *“avoid assimilation in an English sea. Quebec is protected to some degree by thirty million Canadians. Separate, it will be isolated, drowned. Quebecers will therefore have to learn English and will be more easily assimilated.”* (tr.)

Although a minority would be willing to extend special treatment to Quebec to keep the province in confederation, even most of those participants outside Quebec who recognize the province's distinct society strongly believe that its distinctiveness must be protected within a fair and equal confederation or Quebec must be left to pursue its destiny alone. A participant in Alberta reflected the emotion with which many hope Quebec can accept an arrangement that both sides will find acceptable, *“I think Quebec does have to make a choice once and for all: In or Out. The country cannot go on under a constant threat. It is not fair to Quebecers nor is it fair to other Canadians. Quebec with its unique language and culture is what makes Canada different. We must not lose this. Please believe me. We need you now more than ever.”*

The comments of participants outside Quebec on the province's distinctiveness tended strongly to focus on what this distinctiveness brought to Canada as a whole, and did not by and large reflect an appreciation of the strong sense of nationhood and need for self-determination that we found among participants from Quebec. With this in mind, the Forum undertook two initiatives to explore whether personal contact between Canadians from Quebec and elsewhere would help bring about a better understanding of each others' societies and national aspirations. One project was an exchange of participants from group discussions in Wainwright, Alberta, and Marieville, Quebec; the other was an initiative supported by VIA Rail which involved a train-car load of Forum participants from Toronto trav-

elling to Montreal, and being billeted in the homes of participants there, followed on the next weekend by the Montreal hosts travelling to Toronto to spend time in the homes of the Torontonians.

The results were striking for both sets of participants. Almost all came away with a greatly enhanced understanding of the others' society, and a more subtle appreciation of the positions expressed and the concerns held on both sides of the Quebec debate. Said one of the Wainwright participants, *"Quebec's needs will not make the country weaker, it will make it stronger. My greatest fear is that the country is not mature enough to realize this and will, in a selfish and childish fashion, demand from Quebec what it cannot give. It is now our move."* A francophone Montrealer said, upon arrival back in Montreal from Toronto, *"It's too soon to say I'm no longer a sovereigntist but at least I know there is in Canada this strong will from some people to keep Quebec in Canada and it's very touching."*

These exchanges clearly demonstrated, in our view, that the greater understanding that comes from personal contact between citizens of Quebec and of the rest of Canada can be enormously beneficial in creating a climate for dialogue and accommodation.

### ***Does Equal Have to Mean The Same?***

Although the Forum's participants have not, by and large, engaged in detailed discussion on the current division of powers between the federal and provincial governments, the insistence from those outside Quebec on a fair and equal confederation is clear, as noted above. Certainly, outside Quebec we have not found a significant desire for greater devolution of powers to provincial governments; on the contrary, participants are much more likely to suggest areas (notably in health care and education) in which the federal government should take an even stronger role than at present. A participant from British Columbia expressed the view of the majority of those who spoke to the Forum in saying, *"Quebec is an important part of our country. It provides spirit and culture and diversity. But if the price for Quebec staying in Confederation means giving*

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***"Quebec's needs will not make the country weaker, it will make it stronger..."***

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***"...if the price for Quebec staying in Confederation means giving up most of the powers of a central government, it cannot happen..."***

*up most of the powers of a central government, it cannot happen. Better opt out and see if we can be better neighbours than family members."*

Non-constitutional mechanisms might be found to accommodate a number of Quebec's and other provinces' desires for control in certain areas. In the view of participants outside Quebec such agreements would have to be made in the context of a strong pan-Canadian framework of equal rights, national standards, and equal accessibility to programs and services by all Canadians for them to be acceptable. As a letter writer from Alberta expressed it, "*We must do all we can to keep Canada together but not by granting one province more or less power than any other.*" Participants' strongly-held views on individual equality and on the need for commitment to a common concept of Canadian citizenship were reflected in the group discussion in British Columbia, which reported: "*None of us want to see Quebec separate, but none of us want to see Quebec given special privileges, the 'teacher's pet.' We are all Canadians first and members of regions second. Each may have special needs but the laws should be the same for all.*" Students' Forum participants were also intent that no province have more privileges than any other. A Manitoba student who thought bilingualism is "*a neat idea*" went on to say, "*The French culture should get no more special privileges than the English culture does. No less...but no more.*"

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***"...none of us want to see Quebec given special privileges, the teacher's 'pet'...the laws should be the same for all."***

Across the country, but especially from participants in Quebec, we heard concern about overlapping or duplicated government policies or services among different levels of government. In discussions of what should be the responsibilities of the Quebec government in any new arrangement, jurisdiction over language and culture was usually mentioned; beyond this, however, opinions varied greatly. However, the issue of overlap and duplication was raised in groups across the country, as with the group in Drummondville, Quebec, who said: "*...review the division of powers. Avoid duplications — all provinces are dissatisfied with the current federalism — we are asking for a less centralized Canada.*" (tr.)

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***"...we are asking for a less centralized Canada."***

## *The Question of Sovereignty*

Many participants, while ready to express views in principle on the subject of Quebec's place in Canada, were unwilling to take a final position on renewed federalism or on separation in the absence of a clear articulation of what these two arrangements would involve.

This desire to have all the cards on the table, and to participate in a debate on the reality rather than the theory, was felt both in Quebec and elsewhere. A francophone group in Quebec reported that they wanted to see "*a debate on the economic consequences resulting from Quebec sovereignty*" (tr.); another francophone group in Quebec wanted to know "*the irreparable consequences of a Quebec-Canada divorce: 1. economic, 2. political.*" (tr.)

A letter from Ontario expressed a similar desire: "*Let's have no more wooly talk of sovereignty association, unless we all really understand what it means. Quebec politicians have led the population of Quebec to believe that they can survive as a separate state with all the advantages of being part of Canada and suffer no problems from being a distinct state. Set down the conditions now so that we all understand what true separation really means.*"

While the Forum cannot provide these answers for participants, we can, however, reflect to those who will be developing such options our participants' very high degree of interest in what will be proposed, and the high degree of understanding, knowledge, and concern with which they will assess any proposals for fundamental change in the Canadian federal structure.

### *Federalism or Separation, but No Sovereignty-Association*

Among the options for Quebec's future status which have been put forward by various parties, during the last few years — a list which includes symmetrical and asymmetrical federalism, sovereignty-association, and full independence, along with numerous other models and terms — participants outside Quebec, by a substantial margin, see sovereignty-association as the worst of all worlds. Their message to Quebec is, stay or leave,

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***"...Set down the conditions now so that we all understand what true separation really means."***

but if you leave, it must be a complete departure. A number of representative quotes from Canadians who spoke to the Forum convey the flavour of the majority view:

*"It was felt Quebec is like a teenager who wants his own room, telephone, and so forth, yet still expects an allowance from 'Dad.' If Quebec goes, it must go all the way without keeping one hand in Canada's 'pocket.'" (Ontario)*

*"If Mr. Parizeau and his friends want to go, let them, with what they can take on their backs and nothing more." (Newfoundland)*

*"If they decide to separate it should be complete. No sovereignty association. It should be declared a foreign country and treated as such." (New Brunswick)*

*"I want Quebec to remain in Canada, but as an equal, not a superior. I am distressed at Quebec's greed and selfishness. If Quebec separates there must be no sovereignty association, no economic union, no common currency. If Quebec breaks up this country it will be an enemy and one does not associate with enemies." (British Columbia)*

*"I believe that most Canadians love Quebec and wish that it would remain a part of Canada. However...I am fed up with their threatening to leave Canada...I say let them leave Canada — after paying their fair share of our deficit. We should not give in to their wild demands which would wreck the Federal system. We would be a much stronger Canada without them." (Ontario)*

*"If (Quebec) can't find a way to adapt to our framework of federalism, then — and I write this with much sadness — I think Quebec ought to be allowed to leave." (Alberta)*

Furthermore, a considerable number of participants who were willing to contemplate Quebec's separation also had views on what the terms should be:

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**"If they decide to separate it should be complete. No sovereignty association..."**

*"I believe that if Quebec separates it should separate with good will but with no ties. I cannot believe that we could progress with a common currency. Canada should be allowed to maintain a corridor through Quebec and free access through the St. Lawrence Seaway." (Prince Edward Island)*

*"(If Quebec leaves) they must pay their share of the national debt and pay for any federal buildings and institutions that are located in Quebec. Also the members of Parliament including the prime minister (Mulroney) and senate and heads of federal institutions in Quebec should have no say in the negotiations." (Saskatchewan)*

*"If Quebec goes, then the rest of Canada must draw a line in the sand: no common currency, do not share defence, share federal debt; stop transfer of \$\$ and projects in Quebec. The rest of Canada must not be held under the gun." (Ontario)*

Within Quebec, the majority view was characterized by a serenity about the future — that a suitable arrangement would be made, one way or the other. From a group discussion in Quebec, we heard: *"Quebec will be stronger when it is independent than it is now...It costs more now for Quebec to be part of the Canadian federation. It pays more than it gets from the federal system."* (tr.) Another group recognized that Quebec independence would break up Canada, but told us that is not their concern: *"Canada will be broken in two. That doesn't concern us."* (tr.)

This view was not, however, universally shared within Quebec. There was a wide recognition of the possible negative consequences on the province of separation; a caller from Quebec City to the 1-800 line expressed the ambivalence of many Quebecers in saying, *"Quebec gives the impression of believing itself to be more advanced than the rest of Canada. If there is a separation, I will stay in Quebec, but I don't want to have to choose. It's up to English Canada to act."* (tr.) A Montrealer said, *"If Quebec separates, it's the little people who will suffer. This separation promises nothing for ordinary people."* (tr.) A small number ex-

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***"...if Quebec separates it should separate with good will but with no ties."***

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***"Quebec will be stronger when it is independent than it is now..."***

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***"Canada will be broken in two. That doesn't concern us."***

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***"...It's up to English Canada to act."***

pressed concern about the terms of separation: "*Canada might well decide that it would be better to maintain its responsibility towards native peoples in the north...and annex the whole of 'New Quebec' to the Northwest Territories.*"

A relatively small number of francophone Quebecers told us of an emotional attachment to Canada, as with the group in Quebec City who told us: "*...through peaceful cohabitation and collaboration with our English-language counterparts, we have...made Canada a distinct, democratic, compassionate society, different from the United States...a state with which we are proud to identify ourselves.*" (tr.)

### ***Consequences of Quebec Separation***

The overwhelming majority of participants believed that the separation of Quebec would have negative impacts on both Quebec and the rest of Canada, including many of those outside Quebec who express strongly their view that no special treatment should be extended to keep Quebec within Canada. A man in the Yukon said, "*Perhaps it's psychological, but Canada without Quebec would be open to further erosion, dissipation and regional division.*"

Others were quite specific in their concern. In particular, francophone minorities outside Quebec were very concerned about their place in a Canada without Quebec. From New Brunswick, we heard that, "*Francophones outside Quebec would become even more of a minority than they are now. We will have to fight against assimilation. It's a real worry for Acadians in New Brunswick — we have everything to fear from a union with other maritime provinces.*" The same sense of threat was echoed by the Nova Scotia participant who said, "*Without Quebec...Acadians will be weaker...Without Quebec, the concept of multiculturalism itself will be affected. Our assimilation rate is very high. Our minority, nonetheless, added to the population of Quebec, constitutes all the same a mass. Without Quebec, we will be a negligible minority in Canada. And the provinces, except Quebec, are not very con-*

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***"...Canada without Quebec would be open to further erosion, dissipation...regional division."***

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***"Without Quebec...Acadians will be weaker...the concept of multiculturalism itself will be affected."***

scious of bilingualism issues." A group of Franco-Manitobans told us: "If Quebec separates, bilingualism in Canada will be finished." (tr.)

Similarly, English-speaking Quebecers were concerned about the impact on them if Quebec were to separate. While many recognize and support francophone Quebecers' cultural and linguistic aspirations, most who spoke to the Forum opposed separation. One participant spoke for many in telling us, "If Quebec separates I will still consider myself a Canadian first, and if made to choose, would without hesitation choose Canada."

A considerable number of Forum participants outside Quebec see negative consequences for both Quebec and the rest of Canada in the event of separation:

*"I don't want Quebec to go because Canada will fall apart and with regionalism the NWT will be prey to exploitation by provinces." (Northwest Territories)*

*"I wish those who say 'let Quebec go' would look beyond Quebec and see four Maritime provinces that we would be severing at the same time." (British Columbia)*

*"The group expressed much concern that in the event that Quebec separates our country will be swallowed up by the United States, one of the reasons to work out some accommodations between the various areas of the country to prevent such a breakup." (Ontario)*

*"Canada is the only country in the world...which is a member of both the British Commonwealth, and its French equivalent, La Francophonie." (Ontario)*

*"An independent Quebec would severely damage the pride many Canadians take in their united country...it seems likely that New Brunswick would lose something of its closeness to Quebec and perhaps would seek stronger regional ties with the Atlantic provinces or New England." (New Brunswick)*

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**"I don't want Quebec to go because Canada will fall apart..."**

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**"...our country will be swallowed up by the United States."**

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**“Quebec separation will adversely affect the future destiny of this province...”**

*“(Quebec separation) will adversely affect the future destiny of this province...We, as a province, have more to lose than any of the other Atlantic provinces. We have historic economic linkages with Quebec, i.e., Labrador.” (Newfoundland)*

In addressing Quebec’s future with Canada, the consequences of Quebec separation were the principal focus for the senior grades in the Students’ Forum. Most who addressed the issue foresaw negative consequences: *“If Quebec becomes a new country, it will cause massive problems for Quebec, Canada and the world,”* said a class in Alberta. *“We would lose shipping privileges of some of our major waterways like the St. Lawrence river.”* An Ontario class saw the consequences as: *“Possible loss of waterways, CPR, possibly the French in other provinces would feel hostile, lost, deserted. Sport teams coming from Quebec would be lost. Natural resources from Quebec would be lost.”*

A minority, but a passionate one, among Forum participants feels the possible loss of Quebec very deeply. A correspondent from British Columbia told us, *“Quebec must be, forever, part of Canada. Losing Quebec would be about as bad as losing one’s legs. The French language is part and parcel of our heritage. Let Quebeckers have their signs and schools and everything else related to their language. In turn, they will use English when they need to. If the rest of Canada can’t tell Sud from Nord, then that’s too bad.”* Another, from Alberta, said *“Our arrogant MPs must take time and care to see that realistic wishes of Quebec are attended to in such a manner that Quebec remains an integral part of Canada. I believe that all Canadians know there will be no winners should Quebec separate.”*

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**“Quebec must be, forever, part of Canada...”**

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**“...there will be no winners should Quebec separate.”**

There is, however, among many participants a sense that the rest of Canada can survive the shock of Quebec separation, if the federal government takes a strong leadership position to unite what is left of the country. In a letter from Ontario which captures the view of a great many participants, the writer acknowledged that Quebec’s cultural and linguistic distinctiveness is a fact, and that this fact may certainly result in separation. But he urged that English Canada develop

its strength and unity in the interest of a creative interdependence whether Quebec technically decides to separate or not. He reflected the view of many that a strong central government is a necessity for Canada's future survival with or without Quebec: *"Only a united English-speaking Canada, united not by semantics but by its institutions, will have the clout to deal successfully with Quebec, to resist United States cultural and economic colonization, and to keep its respected place in the world hierarchy of nations."*

## 5. Official languages

The implementation of Canada's official language policy was a major issue of concern for participants, especially outside Quebec (although it is also of considerable importance for English-speaking Quebecers).

### *The Value of the French Fact in Canada*

Forum participants have given a very mixed review to the presence of English and French in Canada. On the one hand, the majority outside Quebec express severe opposition to the implementation of Canada's policy on official languages, which they often see as unnecessary and irrelevant: *"Bilingualism has failed. Quebec should retain French language rights in their province. The rest of Canada is and will remain English. We cannot afford this policy any longer. French should continue to be taught across Canada with proviso that English be taught in Quebec,"* reported a group in Alberta. On the other hand, a significant number, and often the same people, express their appreciation for the fact that Canada's population is made up of two different language groups and value the distinctiveness this gives our country: *"I do not believe that French should enjoy protection only in Quebec. It is one of Canada's two national languages and part of Canada's identity...Tolerance is needed on both sides,"* said a participant in Manitoba.

Complaints against official languages policy as it is applied by the federal government are legion, and are linked with a number of other issues. However, the dis-

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***"Bilingualism has failed..."***

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***"I do not believe that French should enjoy protection only in Quebec."***

inction must be made between the changes citizens wish to see in the *application* of the policy, and the value they place on bilingualism as a *personal goal* for themselves or an *aspiration* for their children, as well as on having a country in which two languages are spoken and respected. The two sides of the coin were captured by a participant from Manotick, Ontario, who said, *"Two languages should be an asset, but administration of 'official bilingualism' has taken a potentially wonderful and unifying asset and made it hurtful and divisive."*

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***"Two languages should be an asset..."***

### ***Quebec's Bill 178***

An underlying theme in much of the discussion of official languages policy was the opposition expressed by many participants outside Quebec toward that province's law on the language of signs, Bill 178, which imposed restrictions on the use of languages other than French for external display, and the subordination of languages other than French for internal display. These restrictions are symbolic to participants outside Quebec of a rejection of two decades of effort toward an officially bilingual country.

As well, Bill 178 was seen as representing an approach to individual rights which is inconsistent with the values expressed by the majority of contributors outside Quebec. The Quebec government's use of the notwithstanding clause to exempt Quebec language policy from the official language rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was widely criticized as not reflecting appropriate Canadian values. A letter-writer from Ontario made an often-heard statement in saying, *"Much of the Canadian antipathy towards Quebec can be traced to the Quebec language charter."* A group in Richmond, B.C., said: *"...bilingualism is expensive, especially since Quebec doesn't allow English on signs."* An Alberta participant also made the link. *"I would like to see Canada be bilingual, but not forced in areas where there are no French. I also believe the signs in Quebec should be in both languages."*

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***"Much of the Canadian antipathy towards Quebec can be traced to the Quebec language charter."***

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***"...the signs in Quebec should be in both languages."***

English-speaking Quebecers were much less concerned with these restrictions in talking to the Forum than were Canadians outside Quebec. Most English-

speaking Quebecers who spoke to the Forum viewed the protection of the French language as necessary to Quebec, and to Canada, and conveyed a call for greater tolerance on both sides. Many felt that the two language groups in Quebec are co-existing increasingly peacefully, and blame the politicians and elites for continuing to create tensions between them: *"I do not, as an anglophone, feel threatened, although sometimes somewhat 'foreign.' I believe that French should remain the first language of Quebec, and that anglophones living in the province should be prepared to communicate in this language, just as francophones living in an English province would learn to communicate in English."*

Nonetheless, Quebec's language laws were perceived by many English-speaking Quebecers as exceeding the bounds of necessity, especially as they were perceived to hinder freedom of expression: *"I recognize and accept that French is the dominant and primary language in Quebec. I also believe that the French language can be promoted **without** hindering freedom of expression. Bill 178 irritates me."* Expressing the typically strong sense from anglophone Quebecers that Quebec can only retain the French language and culture within the framework of a united Canada, one said, *"Canada's democratic magnanimity has provided an incubator so that the French language and culture could grow and prosper in the new world and it will continue to do so as long as Québec remains an integral part of a strong united Canada."*

From francophones in Quebec, we often heard comments about what they viewed as the restrictive and ungenerous language policies of other provinces, compared to which they viewed Quebec's approach to English in a very favourable light. *"If all the francophones in other provinces would be treated like anglophones in Quebec, this would be 'paradise' since there is no bilingualism in other provinces,"* (tr.) we were told by a group of Quebec francophones.

We heard from francophones outside Quebec that they are very concerned about protecting their culture and language, and that they regard the federal government as the major source of help in this protection. An

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***"I do not, as an anglophone, feel threatened..."***

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***"If all the francophones in other provinces would be treated like anglophones in Quebec, this would be 'paradise'..."***

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***“Are our rights as a francophone minority entrenched in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in perpetuity...”***

Albertan told us, *“Most Quebeckers are astonished when they arrive here to hear us speak French and, when they are told that we are Franco-Albertans, often they look at us as though we were Martians!”* (tr.) In an attached copy of a letter to the prime minister, the same participant asked, *“Are our rights as a francophone minority entrenched in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in perpetuity or are they at the mercy of the number of votes your party can win or to please English Canada if you abandon francophones outside Quebec...”* (tr.) A brief from la Commission nationale des parents francophones (the National Commission of Francophone Parents) emphasized the importance of having French schools available for their children, saying that their organization’s sole objective is *“to ensure the implementation of an education system in French as a first language for francophones outside Quebec.”* (tr.)

### ***Bilingualism in the Federal Government***

The majority of contributors who addressed official bilingualism expressed concerns about either the extent or the costs of official languages in the federal government. Although some accepted the principle of serving citizens in the language of their choice where numbers warrant, by far the prevailing view was that official bilingualism was insensitively and excessively applied, was wasteful and divisive, and should be reduced considerably or eliminated altogether.

A group in Peterborough, Ontario captured the majority view in reporting: *“Official bilingualism throughout all of Canada is divisive, unnecessary, impracticable, economically harmful, because English is the business language of the world it must be prime but our educational system should encourage the learning of additional languages.”* A group in Qualicum Beach, B.C., said: *“Official Language Act should be repealed. Too expensive and not needed. French language should be spoken in Quebec and in other areas that are predominantly Francophone.”*

Of those registering views against bilingualism, many did so somewhat reluctantly, and the majority did so for what they considered to be reasons of practical-

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***“Official bilingualism throughout all of Canada is divisive, unnecessary, impracticable, economically harmful...”***

ity: *“Pierre Trudeau’s vision of a multicultural and bilingual society for Canada was a noble one, but it is apparent now that it simply will not work.”*

One contributor, reflecting the distinction some people draw between the services of government being delivered in both languages versus the concept of a truly bilingual country, said, *“I do not believe Canada will ever be a bilingual country. Canada is too vast for that. It’s crazy to expect someone in the heartland of Quebec to become a fluent English speaker when they never have the opportunity to use English. It’s crazy to expect someone in Tuktoyaktuk to learn French, when they are surrounded by people speaking Inuit language.”* On the other hand, a group in North York, Ontario, said: *“Bilingualism by force has not worked at all. If the money invested in language training for the civil service and others had instead been put into ensuring good language instruction in the school systems of the country, we probably would have been bilingual by now.”*

*“Being able to speak both English and French should be a worthwhile personal goal for all citizens of Canada as an essential element of Canadian ‘distinctiveness,’”* summed up one participant. *“It is also an achievable goal, if only the politicians had the courage to admit that the language policies they have been advocating for the past two decades failed miserably and left the country deeply divided. It’s time to scrap the enforced bilingualism policy and heal the wounds.”*

Participants had many complaints about the way of official languages policy is implemented, some specific and some more general. A sampling of what we heard:

*“The cost of providing French-language services across the country is absurd.”*

*“The 4 billion — 5 billion per year cascaded into the so-called Bi-lingual program is a monstrous affront to the people of this country.”*

*“Bilingualism is costing Canadians 10 billion a year and the money is being wasted.”*

*“Take the ‘Official’ out of the language act.”*

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***“I do not believe Canada will ever be a bilingual country...”***

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***“Bilingualism by force has not worked at all...”***

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***“...to speak both English and French should be a worthwhile personal goal for all citizens...”***

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***“...and the money is being wasted.”***

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**"Take the 'Official' out of the language act."**

*"Discontinue \$800 bonus to public servants. It is very divisive."*

*"We cannot escape the suspicion that the definition of 'bilingual' according to the employing agencies of Canada's Civil Service is one whose original language was French and who now can handle English."*

*"Many government positions have been filled with people whose only qualification is the ability to speak French. Let us stop this destructive waste!"*

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**"All the positions of power...have been taken over by Francophones..."**

*"All positions of power in government, civil service, the armed forces and RCMP have been taken over by Francophones, and unilingual anglophones reduced to second-class citizens."*

*"I resented having to take French throughout school just so I could achieve a higher education. Why must it be mandatory for university and certain jobs?"*

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**"...service in either English or French at the federal level of government."**

A minority of participants expressed their support for bilingual services as currently provided by the federal government. *"An official languages policy which guarantees service in either English or French at the federal level of government,"* recommended a group in Merville, B.C., which went on to suggest: *"At the provincial level, service in the predominant language of the province (it is the responsibility of the individual to learn the language of his place of residence)."* A contributor in Manitoba told us, *"My recognition of Quebec's distinctiveness and my belief that Quebec is a vital part of Canada leads me to confirm my support for the status of French and English as official languages across Canada."*

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**"...French and English as official languages across Canada."**

A small number also expressed the view that federal policy should try to accommodate the many languages of Canada's citizens. One participant suggested that, *"We must strive to be sensitive to all cultures not just French. I cannot support a special status for French Canadians. I do support multilingual services available to all citizens of Canada. Included in telephone books in Australia is a number that accesses translation for non-English speaking citizens. That's the kind of equality that interests me."*

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**"We must strive to be sensitive to all cultures..."**

## ***“Two Founding Peoples”***

Many contributors outside Quebec seemed to approach bilingualism as a gesture made to Quebec in the past to make Quebecers more at home in confederation. They believe that considerable effort and resources have been dedicated to this effort, but which is now being rejected, along with Canada, by those Quebecers who wish to separate. Said one contributor, *“In the 1970s English Canada extended the hand of appeasement to Quebec and Official Bilingualism was born. We have now had 25 years of Official Bilingualism failure, Quebec could care less and now plans final separation.”*

However, others, especially members of official language minorities, often recalled the notion of the “two founding peoples” as a basis for today’s approach to language policy. A group of Franco-Ontarians reminded the Forum: *“It was French Canada that was the ‘founding nation,’ not Quebec. Our rights as a minority evolve from the status of ‘founding people,’ and will continue whatever is the outcome of the present constitutional debate.”* Another group of Franco-Ontarians suggested that *“if Ontario declares itself bilingual, the other provinces would follow and Quebec would open up more to us.”*

The concept of “two founding nations,” English and French Canada, came under considerable attack from Forum participants, as with the contributor in Peace River, Alberta, who said, *“...if the two founding peoples are traditionally thought of as the English and the French speaking peoples, we are doing a massive disservice to those residents of Canada who were here long before either. To some extent, it also flies in the face of multi-culturalism in a country boasting that it is a melting pot, a successful amalgamation and integration from people of more than 150 ethnic backgrounds.”* In particular, the concept is seen as insultingly exclusionary to aboriginal peoples, as with the strongly worded statement of a participant who said, *“Only a racist would exclude the aboriginals as a founding people.”*

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***“It was French Canada that was the ‘founding nation,’ not Quebec.”***

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***“Only a racist would exclude the aboriginals as a founding people.”***

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***“Canada is made up of much more than the official ‘two founding races’...”***

The concept is also challenged by those addressing the fact that Canadians who are of neither French nor English origin now account for 37 per cent of the Canadian population. This appreciation of our multiculturalism (which is dealt with in more detail below) was expressed by one commenter who said, *“Canada is made up of much more than the official ‘two founding races,’ English and French, Ontario and Quebec...We must aim to have everyone feel part of the whole.”* Another said, *“...this is a multi-racial country and constitutional/cultural considerations must be expanded beyond the English-French, Canada-Quebec questions.”* Although the “two founding nations” concept had a small number of supporters — as with the British Columbian who said, *“Canada should be bilingual, French and English, since our history recognizes two founding people with two distinct languages”* — the clear view of many Forum participants is that Canada is a land of aboriginal peoples and immigrants (or the descendants of immigrants), and that these groups have made valuable contributions to the development and strength of Canada.

### ***Educational Bilingualism***

As mentioned earlier in this section, an important distinction must be made between participants’ views on the implementation of official languages policy, and their views on bilingualism as a personal or social asset. The Forum’s contributors are by and large quite supportive of second-language instruction, and a considerable number favour increased levels of second-language instruction as part of the education system nation-wide: *“French language should be automatically taught as a second language in schools, and English language should be required as a second language in Quebec.”* Making the same point, another contributor said, *“Personally, I would like to see both languages taught from one end of Canada to the other, starting in kindergarten.”*

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***“French language should be automatically taught as a second language in schools...”***

The virtues of a bilingual country, and the desire for future generations to participate in it fully, were seen by the participant who said, *“We want (Quebeckers) to know that...parents are standing in line*

to enrol their kids in French immersion programs. We must make them aware of our changing attitude in order to counteract the impression given by a few red-neck Ontarians who trampled and burned the Quebec flag...Canada is one of the few countries where one can experience another language and culture within its own boundaries and that is one of the things which make this country so precious to me."

A resident of Terrace, B.C., told us, "I am 'actively' bilingual and I regularly participate in local French Immersion programs. I do so in support of a personal philosophy that language opens the doors of other cultures thereby disclosing new insights towards personal and thus social development." A group discussion in Toronto reported: "... several comparisons were made to bilingual or multi-lingual states in Europe and elsewhere — usually to stress the importance of a unifying central authority alongside linguistic diversity."

### ***Bilingualism in Canada: Unifying or Divisive?***

The view was very often expressed that Canada's official languages policy has contributed significantly to the current crisis, including animosity towards Quebec and/or toward French. Frequently used terms describe bilingualism as "divisive" and as "breaking up the country," as in the view of a contributor who said, "Bilingualism beyond the original constitutional provisions was politically motivated, unjust, uneconomical, divisive and a mistake. We must not go further and the affirmative promotion of French across the country must be stopped." Another told us, "...forcing bilingualism nationally creates anger and makes hiring talented people difficult." An Ontario group said: "(Bilingualism) is perceived as being of little interest to most Quebecers whereas a large number of English Canadians have felt alienated by the implementation of bilingualism in the past two decades."

On the other hand, many participants celebrated the distinctiveness that having two major language groups gives Canada in the world: "Bilingualism, in my view, has become a trait of Canadians. I don't think that there is any threat to anyone's cultural identity."

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**"...parents are standing in line to enrol their kids in French immersion programs..."**

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**"...language opens the doors of other cultures..."**

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**"...forcing bilingualism nationally creates anger..."**

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**"Bilingualism, in my view, has become a trait of Canadians."**

Most contributors were much more supportive of learning and using two (or more) languages than they were of the implementation of official bilingualism, which they see as divisive and wasteful. A former Montrealer now living in Ontario captured the sentiments of many by saying, *"It is in the diversity of how we have been able to retain our two principal cultures in Canada which sets us apart as Canadians from our neighbours to the south and it is this richness in heritage and language that I believe is worth preserving."*

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***"...this richness in heritage and language...is worth preserving."***

Clearly, major irritants exist with current official languages policy; however, many contributors (often the same ones) recognize the need for the federal government to provide at least some level of minority language service, and the notion of French and English as Canada's two primary languages is quite deeply entrenched as part of participants' sense of national identity.

## **6. Aboriginal issues**

Forum participants were highly concerned and virtually unanimous in their discussion of aboriginal issues. Their comments were urgent. *"...we can never be a united nation until the rights and concerns of the true founding peoples...are addressed and settled,"* said one participant; *"Real power in native hands now,"* said another.

The Forum's discussion guide suggested that participants comment on three areas: relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples; the settlement of aboriginal land claims; and the effects of aboriginal self-government. Participants' views on these subjects will be presented in this section; however, we also wish to draw attention to the fact, which we heard repeatedly from groups and individuals in all parts of the country, that people feel very uninformed about aboriginal issues in general, and these issues in particular, and are consequently very reluctant to make specific recommendations. *"A massive education effort is now needed, aimed at ordinary adults, to clarify the aboriginal reality and its historical background...HELP US UNDERSTAND!"* pleaded a group from Nova Scotia. *"We*

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***"...we can never be a united nation until the rights and concerns of the true founding peoples...are addressed and settled."***

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***"A massive education effort is now needed...HELP US UNDERSTAND!"***

want more discussion and education,” said a group in British Columbia. “We don’t know their background or the demands. Very few people know what the Indian people own now, how they get paid, if they own the reserve lands they live on or what is meant by self-government.” A group in Manitoba said, “We don’t know where the starting point for negotiations is. Does it go back to treaty rights?” Participants repeatedly called for more access to information about aboriginal culture and issues.

### ***Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Relations: A Source of Guilt and Shame***

For the vast majority of participants, the history of aboriginal and non-aboriginal relations in Canada is appalling, and they believe the injustices of the past must be rectified. As we heard from a Dene leader in an Electronic Town Meeting. “Our people, whether we are Indian, aboriginal, or Métis, were never defeated, and because of that we have never really spelled out our arrangement with Canada and we’re not really part of confederation.”

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***“...we’re not really part of confederation.”***

Although the Forum heard from only a small number of aboriginal peoples, those who spoke to us often told us, emotionally and compellingly, of the dreadful economic and social conditions which characterize most native communities. In Thompson, Manitoba, a Forum commissioner saw and heard the despair of residents. And also heard the warning of a native man who said, “You can only back dogs into a corner for so long before they come out snapping and biting.”

A group discussion among members of the Native Brotherhood Society in Winnipeg encapsulated many of the aspirations we heard from aboriginal participants, in reporting: “Native peoples should have the right to manage their own affairs. More leaders are just now emerging. Native peoples should have the right to preserve our language and should be able to have their own justice system for their own people — to help stop the vicious circle of repeat crime rate (incarceration). Native people should have the right as do other peoples in Canada such as...the right to have promises made

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***“Native peoples should have the right to manage their own affairs...”***

*promises kept...the right to manage their own minerals from their own land...the right to not be made into something they are not. Assimilate not Integrate."*

Non-aboriginal Canadians who have been to native communities shared the dismay of aboriginal participants concerning the economic and social conditions in these communities: *"Two summers ago I had the pleasure of first hand experiences with aboriginal people,"* said a letter from Ontario. *"In Ontario I visited the native reservations in Moosonee followed by native reserves in Regina and Saskatoon...I was shocked at the living conditions..."* *"Conditions on reserves are terrible, every Canadian must be equal in every respect,"* said a group from Nova Scotia.

Participants faulted both Canadian society in general and the federal government in particular for allowing these conditions to develop and be perpetuated. *"In my opinion, natives and aboriginal people seem to be neglected by the government. I believe they deserve more than they are receiving,"* said a participant in Ontario. A group discussion in British Columbia reported: *"As it was put this evening, the situation (regarding native peoples) is a 'national disgrace' and the collective guilt we feel around the mess in our own nest holds us back from taking the place we should as a peacemaker/keeper in global affairs."*

The aboriginal peoples who spoke to the Forum also had a message to communicate to the rest of Canada: in the words of one woman at a Forum discussion in Whitehorse, *"I've been a 'problem' all my life...It's time we rewrote the history books so we're included, so then people will understand we aren't a problem — we're a people with a rich history."* More specifically, a caller to the 1-800 line from the Northwest Territories told us, *"We, the aboriginal people, do not want to lose our aboriginal rights. We want involvement in constitutional development. We want to work on land claims and get people involved in aboriginal issues and concerns. Leaders of the aboriginal people should get more respect from federal and provincial bureaucrats. Native people should have their own Commission and revise the Indian Act."* From Resolute Bay, NWT, we heard, *"Some laws do not work effectively in the high arctic*

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***"...the situation regarding native peoples is a 'national disgrace'..."***

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***"...I've been a 'problem' all my life..."***

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***"We the aboriginal people...want involvement in constitutional development. We want to work on land claims..."***

*because there was limited or no input by Inuit so there is a perception that laws are ineffective. Language of government forms and other essential government documents are not geared for the majority population — Inuit.*

A considerable number of participants wanted to see the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development abolished, as part of a more comprehensive response to aboriginal issues. *"The Department of Indian Affairs should be reformed or abolished. Land claims should be settled as soon as possible. Natives should become equal citizens not more than equal."* said a report of a group discussion in Saskatchewan.

Non-aboriginal participants often referred to the concepts of "two founding nations" and "distinct societies" in discussing aboriginal issues. *"If anyone is 'distinct,' it is Canada's native peoples,"* said a participant in Manitoba. *"Our aboriginal peoples have taken exception to the description of Quebeckers as a founding nation and I have to confess that I find it extraordinary that our native Indian groups have not been included in that description...It is insulting to those people...this needs action now,"* said a letter from New Brunswick. *"Aboriginal Indians and Eskimos are a Distinct Society,"* we heard from a participant in Saskatchewan. *"The aboriginal people were here before the French and before the English, consideration should be given to their aspirations and they should have a fair share in the running of this country,"* reported a group in British Columbia. Some aboriginal participants expressed concerns about the survival of their cultures: *"The Inuit culture is majority — and it's a gentle culture compared to other Canadian cultures and not as strong in protecting itself,"* we were told in Cambridge Bay, NWT.

A number of participants drew parallels between the situation of aboriginal peoples and that of Quebec. *"Quebec and the native question are tied very closely together, a question of nationhood and asserting their special status. (The group) wondered if it is realistic for native people to have a separate society, going back to the way their life was 300 years ago, and wondered if that's what they want or do they want to live a more*

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***"If anyone is 'distinct,' it is Canada's native peoples."***

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***"The aboriginal people...should have a fair share in the running of this country."***

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***"Quebec and the native question are tied very closely together, a question of nationhood..."***

*modern life,” we heard from Prince Edward Island. A participant in Nova Scotia told us, “We have been so obsessed with Quebec (as Quebec has been so obsessed with itself) that the concerns, not just of native people, but of all other Canadians have not been heard.” Also raised was the impact of Quebec separation on the resolution of aboriginal issues: “An aboriginal member of the group said that much of the land currently in Quebec belongs to the Cree Nation and that if Quebec chooses to separate it should not be allowed to take the Cree Nation and its land from Canada.”*

Some participants were particularly concerned with the conflict between Canada’s treatment of aboriginal peoples and Canadian citizens’ expressed values: as a caller to the 1-800 line said, *“We must make peace with our ancient population and ensure that its interests are protected, not ours. My vision of Canada is that of a nation that is tolerant, that includes Quebec and natives, where power is shared, not fought over.”*

Contributors also highlighted what they saw as the conflict between our desired international image and our domestic disgrace: a letter from Newfoundland said, *“This country has been critical of the treatment given to native peoples and minorities in places like South Africa, Brazil and the USSR. Yet, we have not managed to provide most of our natives and minorities with a means by which they can have adequate input into the way the country is governed.”*

However, despite the majority view that special recognition is required for the needs and aspirations of aboriginal peoples, not all participants supported this view. A significant minority believed that aboriginal peoples already received enough or too much recognition or government support, and that these “special privileges” should be diminished. *“Make them equal, stop supporting them, put them to work,”* said a group in New Brunswick; *“Indians (should) live in our towns, go to our schools, get good jobs, and fight to keep them. This way they will learn self-respect,”* said one in Ontario. A Manitoba group said: *“Aboriginals should be integrated into Canada and then subject to Canadian laws. If they wish to practice their own culture in their own homes, that’s fine.”*

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***“My vision of Canada is that of a nation that is tolerant, that includes Quebec and natives, where power is shared, not fought over.”***

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***“Aboriginals should be integrated into Canada and then subject to Canadian laws...”***

The issue of whether aboriginal peoples should be subject to the same rules concerning taxation as other Canadians was often mentioned, often by people who were at the same time supportive of resolving outstanding grievances. "...*aboriginals should pay taxes like other Canadians,*" said a group in New Brunswick. "*Native people should obey all the laws that apply to the rest of us, including taxation,*" said another in Alberta.

In particular, Canadian youth participating in the Students' Forum were much more opposed to special recognition for aboriginal peoples than were adult participants. The students in general adopted an egalitarian approach to questions of cultural diversity. "*No-one should be treated any differently because of skin colour or their heritage, and believing that they should be is racist in my opinion!*" said a British Columbia high school student — and the senior students who discussed aboriginal issues extended this approach to aboriginal peoples as well. Although a minority of these students identified aboriginal peoples as a society different from other Canadians, as with the student who said, "*The Natives are a communal society and their culture is very important to their way of life,*" the majority felt aboriginal peoples should integrate into a diverse Canadian society. "*Reserves should be done away with because they isolate Natives from the group,*" said a report from a senior high school class in Nova Scotia. "*People should not be given special rights or privileges because they are white or...Native Canadians,*" said a class in Ontario.

Among adult participants, however, the definite majority view was expressed by the letter from Quebec which said, "*(We) have not adequately recognized the rights of the peoples who were living in this territory when it was settled by our forefathers. In justice, we would recognize their rights and invite them to participate in reaching consensus on the future organization of our society.*"

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***"Reserves should be done away with because they isolate Natives from the group."***

## ***Aboriginal Land Claims: A Top Priority***

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***“Land claims should be settled according to the treaties and promises that were made and accepted in good faith.”***

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***“All outstanding land claims should be settled as quickly as possible.”***

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***“...year after year we are made aware of funding available for native people and we are unable to access it.”***

The degree of consensus which we heard on the issue of aboriginal land claims cannot be overemphasized. On no other issue did Forum participants demonstrate such clear-cut agreement: the message to government is that these outstanding claims are a national and international embarrassment, and must be resolved quickly and fairly. *“Land claims should be settled according to the treaties and promises that were made and accepted in good faith,”* we heard from New Brunswick. *“Land claims need to be settled. We have a moral obligation to the aboriginal peoples,”* said a submission from Alberta. *“... a first priority ... settle the Indian and Inuit land claims,”* we were told from Ontario. *“Aboriginal land claims and treaties should be honoured and settled as quickly as possible,”* from Manitoba. *“Native land claims need immediate attention,”* from British Columbia. *“All outstanding land claims should be settled as quickly as possible,”* from Newfoundland.

From aboriginal participants, we heard about the extreme importance they attach to the settlement of land claims; we also heard about the difficulties of native peoples living off reserves. A submission representing 850 native peoples living in the general area of Clinton, B.C., of whom most come from the former Clinton Band, High Bar Band and other bands in the area, told us: *“We are concerned about the lack of absence of funding for native people living in this area. Although the Department of Indian Affairs should be providing services in the area of education, housing, economic development and health and welfare, most of the people in this area do not receive any services. Indian Affairs has adopted a policy of not assisting off-reserve native people. Yet year after year we are made aware of funding available for native people and we are unable to access it.”*

Forum participants did not, by and large, discuss the existing process for the settlement of land claims in detail, to examine its flaws or recommend alternative processes. Rather, they concentrated on what they saw as the federal government’s lack of ability or will to find solutions. In discussing this, and in expressing their

high degree of concern with the lack of progress in recent years, contributors also grappled with reconciling their deeply held values of fairness, on one hand, and individual and collective equality on the other, with what clearly must be special treatment for one group in Canadian society. Most participants felt that special attention is needed to rectify past injustices. A typical majority view was expressed by this participant: *"These often forgotten people must have greater freedom to control their destiny. A more consistent and honourable plan for settling their land claims is justifiable."* And, from another person: *"Treaties must be honoured, in full. Land claims must be dealt with, in good faith, with at least the same degree of respect and generosity that we extend to foreign governments."*

A group discussion in Penticton, B.C., reported: *"The group felt aboriginal peoples had not been fairly treated and that land claims should be settled as soon as possible with priority given to the least complicated claims."* A group in Toronto reported: *"Guilt, shame, anger at past injustice, willing to accede to most verifiable land claims."*

Among those participants who supported quick and fair settlement of land claims, a considerable number qualified their support with concerns about cost, practicality, or rights and responsibilities. *"The federal and provincial governments should settle all legitimate land claims as soon as possible. A condition of this settlement should be that aboriginals assume the same rights and responsibilities as any other citizen of Canada,"* said a participant in Ontario. A group in Alberta said: *"Settle all Native land claims within the next year! If this means making new countries within Canada for them, then so be it, but if that is the path that is chosen, then no more unending monies channeled to them."*

A small minority of participants tempered their support for the settlement of land claims with the view that all Canadians should be equal, and that no Canadians should be given special status, or that aboriginal peoples must be Canadians first. As one participant put it, *"We should negotiate settlements because they were*

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***"...aboriginal peoples had not been fairly treated..."***

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***"...settle all legitimate land claims as soon as possible. A condition of this settlement should be that aboriginals assume the same rights and responsibilities as any other citizen of Canada."***

*here first, but we need to be careful about granting special rights to any groups within a free and democratic society."*

### ***Aboriginal Self-Government: What Does it Mean?***

While the principle of aboriginal self-government is broadly supported by Forum participants, it is also an area where non-aboriginal contributors' self-confessed lack of knowledge prevented them from taking final positions.

We have heard, from some aboriginal participants, the reasons why they view self-government as necessary, and how they view the principles around which it should be implemented: from Cranbrook, B.C., we heard that, *"To the Kt'unaxal/Kinbasket, self-government is the ability to govern ourselves without interference by outside governments...The preservation and promotion of the aboriginal languages must be a shared responsibility of the provincial and federal governments as it was a combined effort between these two governments to destroy the languages of the first peoples in this country...The First Nations governments must be responsible for governing themselves through the implementation of their laws that have been established by their ancestors."* A member of the Norway House and told us, *"...many people don't approve of a native government system at the Ottawa level and provincial level...It will only be bureaucracies, more monies spent at these proposed levels. We believe in Self Government at the Community level but only if we have a voice, self determination, democracy, to plan and to develop together."*

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***"...self-government is the ability to govern ourselves without interference by outside governments..."***

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***"We believe in Self Government at the Community level but only if we have a voice..."***

Aboriginal participants also raised the issue of whether self-government is an inherent, sovereign right or whether it is a matter for legislative jurisdiction, as with a municipal government model. Representatives of First Nations who spoke to the Forum unequivocally reject legislated self-government: *"We do not come to Canadian people with a begging bowl asking for jurisdiction to be put into it,"* we heard in a presentation in New Brunswick. *"We want Constitutional recognition*

*of our existing jurisdiction that has never been extinguished.”* From the Haida Assembly in the Queen Charlotte Islands, B.C., we heard: *“Our Nationhood is not open to question. You cannot give that to us or define that for us. All we are asking for is respect. That mutual respect that we’ve offered so that we can sit down and negotiate a way that we can live together.”*

Although non-aboriginal participants’ concepts of self-government vary widely, most conceive of it *“within (the) Canadian law and political system.”* A group in British Columbia told us: *“Self-government on Reserves is acceptable but must follow the laws of the land.”*

In contrast to the views expressed by aboriginal leaders, most non-aboriginal participants who expressed an opinion on aboriginal self-government believed that it should involve powers similar to those of municipalities: *“Reserves should be converted into self-government through the municipal method...the idea should be to make them as self-sufficient as possible with, at some point, the responsibility of raising part of their budget through taxation.”* Another typical view expressed is, *“Municipal government (elected) by anyone who lives on treaty lands, even non-Indians...(for) the provision of municipal services”* along with *“a self-administered trust that managed the inheritance common to all members of the band.”*

*“The group felt that municipal governments should be set up on the reserves,”* said the report of a group discussion in Ontario. *“Aboriginal Self-Government in a form similar to Municipal Government is acceptable and encouraged. A form of Self-Government that has exemptions from provincial or federal laws and responsibilities would not be acceptable,”* said a group in British Columbia.

One issue which was only occasionally highlighted is the difference between self-government where the land base is apparent and defined, and self-government in other areas, primarily urban, where the connection between territory and jurisdiction is more problematic. Most participants who discussed self-government considered it appropriate for clearly defined territories: as one contributor put it, *“Self-government makes a lot of*

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***“We want Constitutional recognition of our existing jurisdiction that has never been extinguished.”***

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***“...municipal governments should be set up on the reserves.”***

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**"Self-government makes a lot of sense for the larger areas up north. These could be treated on a par with the provinces."**

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**"Any thought of Native groups separating from provincial jurisdiction or from the nation of Canada should be quickly dispelled."**

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**"Doing what is right and just is not always easy and painless. Sacrifice will be easier if it is understood that it is the moral option..."**

*sense for the larger areas up north. These could be treated on a par with the provinces. For smaller territories it becomes problematic. They could have municipal functions."*

Other participants recognize that the municipal model may not satisfy native political, cultural, and social aspirations: *"If a kind of municipal government within a province is envisaged, it would probably be workable and have no appreciable effect on provinces or on Canada. But it would probably be unacceptable to many aboriginal people, particularly those who want to go farther to establish their independence and identity."*

As with the settlement of outstanding land claims, a small number of participants were opposed to the idea of aboriginal self-government. A group in New Brunswick told us: *"...self-government does not seem practical"*; another, in Alberta, said: *"Any thought of Native groups separating from provincial jurisdiction or from the nation of Canada should be quickly dispelled. Native people should obey all the laws that apply to the rest of us..."* A group in British Columbia told us: *"Aboriginal Self-Government in a form similar to Municipal Government is acceptable and encouraged. A form of self-government that has exemptions from provincial or federal laws and responsibilities would not be acceptable."*

But the majority of participants wish the federal government to act, and soon. They recognize that accommodation is needed, and on both sides. In a letter from the Yukon, a Roman Catholic brother whose father was French and whose mother was a Klingit spoke with passion about his ancestors' links with the land, hoping for ways of coming up with mutually acceptable solutions to Canada's problems: *"Canadian citizens have the duty and obligation to give aboriginal people their rights. This could take sacrifice. Doing what is right and just is not always easy and painless. Sacrifice will be easier if it is understood that it is the only moral option and that ultimately it will benefit everyone. Aboriginal people must understand that it is impossible to get everything. They must give up on some demands."*

One contributor from the Yukon summed up the treatment of aboriginal issues by governments in recent years by saying, *"It is incomprehensible that after 17 years of talk and \$40 million dollars that land claims and self-government are still not settled...Every day the government stalls costs taxpayers money. This simply has to stop!"* Forum participants' desire for resolution of these issues is both urgent and unambiguous.

## 7. Cultural diversity

Canada's ethnically and culturally diverse population is, for the majority of participants, one of our most positive national characteristics. However, the way our official multicultural policy reflects this diversity came under considerable criticism.

The essential complaint is that, in the words of a group discussion from Oakville, Ontario: *"Multiculturalism is by itself divisive...we spend too much time being different and not enough being Canadian."* While a great many participants felt that *"more exposure to diverse cultures promotes more tolerance, understanding and cooperation, leading one to Canadian identity"* (Mississauga, Ontario), many of the same people felt as did a group in Richmond, B.C.: *"We are generally in favour of celebrating our cultural heritage. We feel our mosaic character as one of our Canadian characteristics, as opposed to the American melting pot. We feel cultural and ethnic art, music and traditions should be celebrated as in Winnipeg's Folklorama. However, we must remain Canadian first and reinforce that fact through education and cultural events. We must have a strong core to avoid being distracted from who we are."*

Overwhelmingly, participants told us that reminding us of our different origins is less useful in building a united country than emphasizing the things we have in common:

*"A strong sense was voiced that there should be active maintenance of cultural diversity within the country and that people's distinctiveness should be tolerated. However, the group felt that...minority groups should them-*

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***"...we spend too much time being different and not enough being Canadian."***

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***"We are generally in favour of celebrating our cultural heritage...However, we must remain Canadian..."***

*selves promote their own ethnic language and culture in their own homes and cultural milieu. The group stressed, however, that THERE SHOULD NOT BE ACTIVE GOVERNMENTAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT for the promotion of those ethnic cultural and linguistic differences.” (Quebec)*

*“The policy of financial support from our government to foster the maintenance of foreign traditions while at the same time starving national cultural institutions such as the CBC and the Canada Council constitutes negligence.” (Ontario)*

*“A true culture should be in the individual philosophy of living, not in the visible rituals and languages. We do not advocate using government funding to support multicultural activities. We believe this works against unity by creating division in our society.” (Alberta)*

Participants queried the focus on citizens' origins and celebrating heritage cultures, rather than embracing a uniquely Canadian national character and celebrating our Canadian heritage: *“The Federal Government is promoting multiculturalism to the detriment of a true Canadian identity. There should be allowances for the freedom of new Canadians to practice their own culture and language in the confines of their community but the government must make it abundantly clear to all immigrants that to become a Canadian citizen, their foremost loyalty must be to Canada and its laws.”* Participants believe that the symbols of Canadian heritage are being changed or eroded to accommodate new Canadians, thereby leaving few symbols that are identifiably Canadian and reflect our traditions.

*“This leads to the issue of turbans to be worn as part of the R.C.M.P uniform,”* as a participant from British Columbia put it, raising a concern which we heard over and over about one of our most identifiable symbols. *“I was dismayed that the judicial system regarded this as a racial matter. To me, and many other Canadians the R.C.M.P. uniform is a symbol of our Canadian identity and should remain so.”* As mentioned in the discussion of Canadian values, there is considerable concern that the rights of minority groups are

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**“...the maintenance of foreign traditions while at the same time starving national cultural institutions... constitutes negligence.”**

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**“...the R.C.M.P. uniform is a symbol of our Canadian identity and should remain so.”**

eroding the individual rights of Canadians in general. Many groups and individuals who expressed their pleasure in Canada's cultural diversity also expressed their disapproval that historic Canadian symbols or institutions should not be treated as permanent. *"Our new Canadians have more cultural recognition than Canadians,"* said a contributor from Niagara Falls, Ontario.

### ***Funding of Multiculturalism Programs***

A great many participants see the funding of multiculturalism programs as a concrete example of the way in which the government is encouraging divisiveness through our diverse cultural origins, rather than fostering unity. The statements made about public support for heritage cultures were usually unambiguous: a group from Ontario said: *"The group felt that public money should not be spent to keep alive another culture. Rather, it should be the job of the cultural groups to look after preserving their own language and other aspects of their previous culture."* From a group in British Columbia: *"The good aspects of any culture will survive and spread without any help from the government if the people want to keep those aspects alive."* A group in New Brunswick reported: *"(multicultural communities) should be allowed to follow their cultural activities but at their own expense."*

A number of participants, including many of the new Canadians who spoke to the Forum, told us they would prefer to see available public funds spent on language training and other forms of integration assistance for newcomers to Canada, rather than on heritage culture preservation. *"I derive great personal joy from living in a multicultural society. But I also think that we have to be pro-active in dealing with the changing demographics of Canadian society,"* said one participant. *"This means providing funding for special programs where they are needed and insuring that human rights are upheld for all citizens. We need to forego wasteful extravaganzas in favour of effective programs to help integrate rather than assimilate newcomers into Canadian society."*

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***"Our new Canadians have more cultural recognition than Canadians."***

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***"...public money should not be spent to keep alive another culture..."***

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***"...funding for special programs where they are needed and insuring that human rights are upheld for all citizens...forego wasteful extravaganzas..."***

## *No More “Hyphenated Canadians”*

One of the most consistent messages we heard from participants was a desire to see an end to “hyphenated Canadians.” The practice of attaching our origins to our citizenship is very pervasive in Canada, but over and over, from new Canadians as well as others, participants asked the government to understand that our citizens just want to be *Canadian*.

The Muslim Women’s Study Circle told us: *“Ethnic Canadians find it hard to identify themselves as Canadians because they’re always asked about their roots.”* An Ottawa man said, *“I speak as one whose own heritage is basically north European — German, Russian, Danish and English — and I did not come to Canada to try to maintain those heritages, but to leave them behind and do what I could to be Canadian.”* While some contributors either strongly favoured or strongly opposed a culturally diverse society, most enjoyed and embraced our diversity while criticizing the official attitude toward it: *“The society that I envision would understand and accept the differences which each individual and each culture bring to it.”* From another, *“The effect of your ‘multiculturalism’ — nobody is Canadian; instead everyone remains what he was before he came here and ‘Canadian’ merely means the monetary unit and the passport.”* Still another said, *“...if, indeed, we aspire to be a Nation, then such a notion must be more than just an assortment of hyphenated Canadians.”* And, from another, *“there should be no such thing as French Canadians, Jewish Canadians, Irish Canadians...we are all ‘Canadians’ not hyphenated Canadians.”*

The belief that we should all be “Canadians first” was very strongly expressed outside Quebec. In Quebec, the majority sentiment was that newcomers should adapt to the culture of Quebec, and attach themselves to the language and symbols of the province. A group in Drummondville reported: *“Promote the integration of cultures. Fear for Quebec francophones. Promote the French fact in Quebec.”* (tr.) Francophones were less likely than English-speaking Canadians to focus on multiculturalism policy as a barrier to cultural unity:

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***“...I did not come to Canada to try to maintain those heritages, but to leave them behind and do what I could to be Canadian.”***

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***“...nobody is Canadian; instead everyone remains what he was before he came here...”***

*"We believe that we accept them well but we have the impression that they come to Canada but do not want to be Canadian or Quebeckers. They form communities and close themselves off in a little Italy, a little Greece, a little China, etc. They should make an effort to integrate with us." (tr.)*

The young people who participated in the Students' Forum had a somewhat different view of Canada's cultural diversity than did their adult counterparts. Students were less likely to raise concerns about newcomers' attachment to Canada, and more likely to raise racism in Canada as a serious problem. *"Canada is a rainbow of people and places,"* said a fourth-grade student in London, Ontario, reflecting the general acceptance among student participants of Canadians' diverse origins. But, *"Racism is an issue which should be resolved,"* said a grade twelve student in Bedford, Nova Scotia; *"We are a racist society, as evidenced by the media and everyday events,"* said a tenth-grade student in Kitchener, Ontario.

Some adult participants also raised the presence of racism and racial discrimination in Canadian society as issues which need to be addressed. The Canadian Ethnocultural Council told us: *"There is some noted public opinion to suggest that Canadians are 'over-governed.' It is important to note that from the perspective of minorities or those facing inequality or discrimination, the opposite is the case. The struggle of minority ethnocultural communities is largely one of turning around the way things have been done in the past, on the premise that while society is changing, institutions are not."*

## **8. The Canadian economy**

Concerns about the economy dominated many Forum discussion groups. Participants expressed a deep-seated insecurity about the current state and future prospects of the Canadian economy. They did not broadly accept the dislocations that come from measures designed to respond to international economic forces. *"What concerns people now is whether they'll have a job tomorrow, how high taxes are and the quality of life in their*

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***"...they come to Canada but do not want to be Canadian or Quebeckers. They form communities and close themselves off..."***

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***"We are a racist society, as evidenced by the media and everyday events."***

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***"...society is changing, institutions are not."***

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***"What concerns people now is whether they'll have a job tomorrow... Tinkering with clauses in the constitution comes a poor second."***

local community. *Tinkering with clauses in the constitution comes a poor second,*" said one British Columbian, echoing the view of most participants. The vast majority regard economic factors as being largely beyond their individual control, but they hold their governments responsible for creating a healthy economic climate within which they and their families may prosper.

Although participants usually focused on specific aspects of the economy, and did not generally engage in discussion of the causes underlying poor economic performance, or the interaction among the different elements of economic policy, a small number presented their concerns at the level of the economy as a whole. *"This country, with all its riches, should be economically #1 in the world, but it is slipping deeper behind,"* said a letter from Ontario, going on to say, *"The reason for this is its industrial underdevelopment which in turn comes from the fact that Canada has never been a well managed united country but the sum of ten different, partially underdeveloped and semi-independent, often feuding countries, living beyond their means solely for political expediencies. While we have some dubious 'free trade' with the U.S., we still have no free trade within Canada."* A Newfoundlander told us, *"Inter-provincial trade barriers, provincial differences in codes and standards, and an absence of transferability of credentials, education, and social services are all testimonials to the failure of Canada to become a nation...Support for decentralization should be based on the rational evaluation of appropriate divisions of power, not knee-jerk reactions to a failed federal system."*

A considerable number of participants linked their concerns about the economy with what they saw as the fundamental social contract of the Canadian federation. An Ontarian who wrote to us believed that *"Canada was founded with the belief in an active interventionist government. Not that this has always worked for Canada's benefit, inter-provincial trade barriers attest to that, but the fact is, an entire system and way-of-life has been built upon premises other than the ones espoused by Brian Mulroney and other proponents of*

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***"Canada has never been a well managed united country..."***

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***"...decentralization should be based on the rational evaluation of appropriate divisions of power, not knee-jerk reactions..."***

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***"Canada was founded with the belief in an active interventionist government..."***

*economic 'liberalization' ...This stemmed from the belief (originally Conservative/Tory in nature) that government was the 'care-taker' of society, and that in view of Canada's peculiar socio-economic and geographic circumstances, economic rationality was ill-suited for the Canadian milieu and the public interest, or common good."*

*"If you have any kind of decent value system, you do not measure the success of a country on its performance in international markets," one participant told us, going on to say, "A country is successful if it feeds and educates its children, cares for its sick, disabled and elderly, and promotes a healthy social and cultural life which enables the full development of all its citizens at a decent standard of living. Competition is an economic tool which can help to bring about these conditions. To make it an end in itself as the federal government now does contradicts the sense of community co-operation and sharing which we need for a country which is truly successful in human terms."*

There is a strong sense, outside Ontario and Quebec, that economic policy decisions are driven by the needs of central Canada, and that their effects on other regions are of little importance to Ottawa. A participant from Alberta said, *"An example of the type of policy I am referring to is the recent high interest rate policy of the federal government. It was in place to battle inflation. Where was the inflation? In Ontario. Did the Western Provinces or the Maritimes have an inflation problem? No. Did they pay the high interest rates? Yes."* In Manitoba, we heard, *"At present, Ontario and Quebec have most of the money — business — power — and population. Whatever is good for them they endorse — even to the detriment of other regions of Canada."*

Ultimately, participants regarded economic policy as a matter for governments; the conundrum at the moment is that, in an area vitally important to them as individuals, their fate is in the hands of governments they do not trust to tax or spend wisely or to consult them adequately before changing important ground rules: a group in Scarborough, Ontario, told us, *"We need lead-*

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***"...you do not measure the success of a country on its performance in international markets."***

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***"...Ontario and Quebec have most of the money - business - power - and population..."***

*ers who are visionaries who would lead us in this effort. We can no longer depend on our non-renewable resources to carry the country's economy."*

### **Government Deficits**

By far the most frequently mentioned economic issue was the deficit. Apart from the general concern that the deficit be reduced, participants often recommended limits on governments' ability to incur large deficits, limits on or strict monitoring of government spending, and a balanced budget. A group discussion in Hay River, NWT, told us, *"We are living beyond our means. Our inability to deal with our debt is the one thing that will destroy Canada."* Another group discussion, in Waterloo, Ontario, reported that, *"Canada is a rich country, rich enough to aid others even more than we are currently doing. However, we have acquired massive debt loads, both as a nation and as individuals. We simply cannot continue to live at our present level. Unless we curb our considerable wastefulness, cut down on unnecessary extravagances and lower our needs and expectations, both as a nation and as individuals, we may ruin ourselves and be unable to give anything to anyone else."* A caller to the 1-800 line put it succinctly: *"The government is living a champagne life on a beer budget."*

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***"...Our inability to deal with our debt is the one thing that will destroy Canada."***

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***"The government is living a champagne life on a beer budget."***

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***"...buying votes and then leaving the bills for the next generation is an odious way to get power..."***

A popular idea was some form of limitation on the deficits governments would be allowed to incur. *"We must have a clause in the constitution that sets clear limits for both federal and provincial governments on how much debt will be allowed in a given year and also how much accumulated debt will be allowed,"* said one letter. *"The business of buying votes and then leaving the bills for the next generation is an odious way to get power and it must be prevented in the future."*

### **The Goods and Services Tax**

With respect to the GST, comments were overwhelmingly negative. Generally, participants felt that the GST was forced on them without adequate attention to what is seen as the clearly expressed opposition of the citizenry. From the 1-800 line, a caller asked, *"How will*

the people of Canada be able to influence the government through the Citizens' Forum if their ideas on the GST and free trade were so easily ignored?" A letter from Alberta told us, "The one thing it (the GST) does do is remind me, every time I pay for an item or send out an invoice, how much I hate the government." From Manitoba, we were told, "Reduce the national deficit, but not with devices (GST) that impoverish a large portion of the population."

A small percentage expressed some support for the tax, particularly if it could be used to reduce the deficit. "Lower the deficit with the GST collected," said one letter from Ontario.

### **Government Spending**

Forum participants were quite concerned about government spending, perceiving much of it as wasteful and not addressing the country's real problems. Spending in a number of areas — notably on social services, regional economic equalization, communications, education, and the environment — received widespread support and calls for increases, as from the Ontario participant who called for "...the political will to unite this country under a strong central government which will provide universal medicare, old age security, unemployment insurance, day care and equal opportunities for education."

However, there is a broad perception that a great deal of other money is spent by government in frivolous or futile pursuits. A participant in British Columbia told us that, in his view, the major issue is "Government spending, I feel that government employees are allowed to spend too much money without an investigation when there are people starving." A Nova Scotian, reflecting the widespread perception that a disproportionate share of government spending occurs in Quebec, said, "The federal government can pour billions of dollars into Lavalin and Bombardier yet it has to cut back in Atlantic or Western Canada."

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**"The one thing it (the GST) does do is remind me...how much I hate the government."**

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**"...a strong central government which will provide universal medicare, old age security, unemployment insurance..."**

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**"...government employees are allowed to spend too much money..."**

## *Regional Economic Disparities*

Considerable concern was expressed about economic disparities among Canada's different regions. Although these concerns were heard more frequently in the Atlantic region than elsewhere, citizens in all parts of the country indicated their awareness of regional economic disparities and their continued willingness to help eradicate them.

Anxiety in Atlantic Canada over the condition and future prospects of that region's economy cannot be overstated. While an entrepreneurial spirit is strong, Atlantic Canadians are aware of the region's small population base and continued need to rely on economic assistance from other parts of Canada; however, there is a strong sense that the region's interests are not of sufficient importance to Ottawa. A group discussion in Nova Scotia reported: "*There was a general feeling that interests of Maritimers are of little importance to federal government: cuts to transfer payments in education, apparent phasing out of medical insurance payments by federal govt., Via Rail cuts, etc. indicate indifference to regional concerns. Anxiety to placate Quebec seems more important to federal govt. than regional inequalities.*" "*...the Maritimes are forgotten areas of Canada...have never been treated equally,*" we heard from New Brunswick, where we were also told, "*The Atlantic Provinces should be exempt from federal budget cuts.*"

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***"...interests of Maritimers are of little importance to federal government ...Anxiety to placate Quebec seems more important to federal government than regional inequalities."***

A letter from Newfoundland highlighted the differences in the relative definitions of recession and prosperity in different parts of Canada. "*Last summer I spent several weeks in Ontario, particularly Toronto, Oshawa, and Ottawa,*" this participant said. "*A trade recession was in progress then or so we were told. I saw new homes being built by the score; department stores doing business at a rate seen in Corner Brook only at Christmastime; more new cars in an average parking lot than here we see in a dealership yard. My only comment on that kind of trade recession is, please give us some of it here in Newfoundland!*"

We also heard concerns expressed in western Canada, particularly in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, about the condition of the agriculture industry. *"The farms are going under,"* we were told over and over. A group in Manitoba asked for *"more consideration given the agricultural areas and farmers of Manitoba. If not looked after, there will be no farmers left."* Another wanted to see *"a system to spread wealth in Canada to have the poorer parts of Canada have the same privileges as richer provinces."*

We heard very little objection expressed from the "have" provinces to continuing their contributions to less advantaged regions; however, participants in British Columbia and Alberta very often expressed opposition to government support for the economies or industries of Ontario and Quebec. *"I wish to see a significant change in the economic relationships between the center (Ontario and Quebec) and the West,"* was a typical comment from British Columbia; *"I think the center's economic domination and exploitation of the West should be ended forthwith. I would be prepared to see the West continue to subsidize the Maritimes but not the center."* Even in Ontario, we heard little call for direct government support to Ontario and Quebec industries; the issue was not a major point of discussion for Quebec participants.

### ***Free Trade Agreement***

A high degree of interest and concern was manifested concerning the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, with very little positive comment coming forward except in Quebec where the agreement is more positively perceived. *"Withdraw from Free Trade agreement which only benefits international bankers and companies,"* said a group in British Columbia. Participants thought that too many businesses are locating outside Canada; water resources were not specifically excluded from the FTA; the US was given an unacceptable level of access to Canadian energy resources; the FTA is costing Canadians too many jobs; and, the US benefits disproportionately or solely from the agreement: *"Free trade is killing Canadians with plants closing and moving to the cheaper U.S. markets. The*

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***"...spread wealth in Canada to have the poorer parts of Canada have the same privileges as richer provinces."***

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***"...the center's economic domination and exploitation of the West should be ended..."***

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***"Free trade is killing Canadians...It is too much to the advantage of the U.S."***

*deal needs to be renegotiated to level out the playing field. It is too much to the advantage of the U.S.”* was a typical comment.

Participants expressed their concern and anger that the dislocations they perceive to be resulting from the agreement have not been addressed by government. A group in south-western Ontario told us that, for them, a major issue of concern *“is that of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and its effects on a region where the Canadian automotive industry is heavily concentrated, such as Windsor. The region must be strengthened by the government, to help alleviate (the damage) which will be caused by the Free Trade Agreement.”*

## **9. Responsible leadership and participatory democracy**

One of the strongest messages the Forum received from participants was that they have lost their faith in both the political process and their political leaders. They do not feel that their governments, especially at the federal level, reflect the will of the people, and they do not feel that citizens have the means at the moment to correct this. Many of them, especially outside Quebec, are prepared to advocate and to support substantial changes to the political system if these would result in a responsive and responsible political process, and in responsive and responsible political leaders.

Participants' desire for these changes is related to a loss of faith, on their part, that the existing political system will make decisions which reflect their values and aspirations for the country. To the extent that reforms can be made which would restore this faith, participants' demand for direct participation in decision making would be less. In other words, they would like major decisions affecting them to be made in a responsible manner, and in a manner that is responsive to both the expressed views and the general well being of citizens.

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***“...Parliament is a 'charade' of political gamesmanship.”***

*"Honesty and spirit of service to the people — none of the other issues can be addressed without such goodwill from all parties. At present Parliament is a 'charade' of political gamesmanship." (From a couple in their 70s, in Ontario)*

*"The group wants our elected officials to get off their collective butts and start 'leading' this country." (From a group in Manitoba)*

*"Partisan politics have alienated Quebec and divided the regions. Political parties have promoted false perceptions among Quebecers: Tell Quebec whatever she wants to hear, so long as she gives us her votes. Tell Quebec how different she is from the rest of Canada, and that only our party can represent her interests. Politicians have set Quebec at odds with the rest of Canada, and to a lesser degree the regions with each other." (From a letter from Saskatchewan)*

*"We can't be fooled into thinking that all we need is to find the right formula and everything will be fine. Our political leaders are bankrupt, and lack vision or mandate." (From a group in Manitoba)*

*"There isn't a single thing we can do. We vote in a government that says they will make things better or whatever else they say...When have they kept a promise? But it doesn't matter what I think, I am 14; no one listens..." (From a junior high school student in Ontario)*

*"Just terrible the way they carry on in Parliament like unruly children. Bad tempered brats, no control, quarrelling between parties. Why don't they get together and use their better ideas?" (From a group in Ontario)*

*"Political priorities are not necessarily national priorities...Grassroots organizations should be consulted to a greater level." (From a group in New Brunswick)*

*"There is a vacuum of leadership, with no clear vision and purpose, to our national destiny, and graft, corruption and inefficiency prevail, in a burdensome bureaucracy of legality and taxation." (From a letter from Quebec)*

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**"...Politicians have set Quebec at odds with the rest of Canada, and to a lesser degree the regions with each other."**

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**"...Our political leaders are bankrupt, and lack vision or mandate."**

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**"...it doesn't matter what I think, I am 14; no one listens..."**

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**"There is a vacuum of leadership, with no clear vision and purpose..."**

The requirement for responsive and responsible leadership is not an issue separate from the others treated elsewhere in this part of the report. Rather, it is an underlying theme which runs throughout the comments we heard on a wide variety of issues: on management of the economy, on treatment of aboriginal peoples, on constitutional change and the place of Quebec in the federation, on bilingualism and multiculturalism. In all these areas, citizens have told us they do not feel governed according to their wishes and their fundamental values.

As participants discussed the problems and challenges they see in Canada's future, commissioners were often told that the media must take a considerable share of the blame for focusing on our divisions, for not doing enough to convey basic, reliable information, and for failing to show us to ourselves in a constructive manner. A group discussion participant in Islington, Ontario, put it succinctly: "*Media: a major source of misinformation and confusion.*"

In many cases, participants expressed the view that what they saw as the media's emphasis on confrontation and editorializing distorted the presentation of issues and increased the chances that problems would turn into crises: "*The media has done us much harm in reporting on such things as Quebec separatist feeling and on Meech Lake. The media has blown things out of proportion and sensationalized,*" said a group in Manitoba. A participant in Merville, B.C., said, "*(the) media must stop emphasizing our differences and concentrate more on those things which we have in common and which unite us.*" It is clear to us that Forum participants are charging not just political leaders, but also the media, with a responsibility to adhere to fundamental Canadian values in fulfilling their role in our future.

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***"(the) media must stop emphasizing our differences and concentrate more on those things which we have in common and which unite us."***

### ***Fundamental Values to Which Governments Must Adhere***

Fundamental Canadian values, clearly expressed to the Forum, are especially relevant in considering participants' disaffection with the political process. Specifically, the vast majority of the citizens who spoke to

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us believe that the country is not being governed according to the values they espouse and which they believe characterize Canada as a society.

The three fundamental values most often mentioned as needing to define governments' behaviour are equality, fairness, and cooperation.

The concept of equality applies both to individuals and to their provinces, territories and regions. The equality of individual citizens is a concept that has gained considerable currency in Canada since the Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect. Participants strongly disapprove of government policies which seem to promote the rights of groups over individuals, or seem to limit the rights of individuals, especially in comparison with citizens in other Canadian jurisdictions. Similarly, as discussed in more detail in the section on Quebec and Canadian Unity, the Canadians who spoke to the Forum will not countenance apparent inequality among provinces or "special privileges" for one or more provinces.

Second, a strong theme stressed by a great many contributors was that Canada is a country in which citizens and governments should try to make decisions that are fair — to the citizenry in general, to different provinces and regions, and to different groups that extend across geographical and political boundaries within the country. A number of groups were often mentioned as having been unfairly treated in the past, notably aboriginal peoples, but also Acadians, anglophones in Quebec, francophones outside Quebec, westerners, and maritimers. The converse of this sentiment is that no group should receive unwarranted preferential treatment.

Third, a significant number of contributors also stressed the need for a cooperative effort if we are to achieve the type of Canada we desire. A pervasive theme of Canadian history and literature is that we are an improbable country built on compromise and cooperation, in the face of a forbidding geography and climate that would otherwise overwhelm us. The present day incarnation of this underlying concept of Canada is the recognition that we are still a relatively small population next to a very large and potentially dominant

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neighbour, and that any action we take which reduces our capacity to act as a unit will ultimately damage, more than benefit us. Further, participants encourage not just a passive cooperation — working together because we do not have an alternative — but also a much more active effort toward mechanisms which will bring together our competing interests and work toward resolving them in a peaceful, cooperative manner.

The vast majority of those who spoke to the Forum do not believe their current leaders have been governing in accordance with fundamental values. While some expressed sadness and disappointment in their leaders, a great many more were angry, with their anger being directed particularly at federal politicians. The prime minister was a favourite target, with many participants even calling for his resignation. A number of quotes from participants will convey both the tone and the general message being delivered:

*"...lack of vision is the actual reason behind your forum. The Prime Minister, his Cabinet, his Party, indeed all parties and all the legislative assemblies all lack vision. None have been, none are capable of seeing a new future for Canada and when we call for a proposal, they admit to a lack of one."*

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**"...the Prime Minister, his Cabinet, his Party, indeed all parties and all the legislative assemblies all lack vision..."**

*"...another problem is the Prime Minister's inability to keep in touch with the public. Most people are against Free Trade, G.S.T., cutbacks (just to name a few) but he still rams it down our throats whether we like it or not."*

*"Our three political leaders are not committed to intellectual integrity."*

*"The secrecy involved in the Meech Lake process must never happen again."*

*"The Government alone is responsible for the broad feeling of disunity in Canada. Its handling of issues reflecting Canadian unity is deplorable."*

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**"The Government alone is responsible for the broad feeling of disunity in Canada..."**

*"The people who haven't got the message — and don't want to hear it — are the politicians, particularly our Prime Minister. He will do his desperate best to go the decentralized route even if it means the dismemberment*

*of the country. If he loses Quebec, he loses his power base. The scary part is that many premiers wouldn't mind this more-power-to-the provinces scenario at all."*

There is no ambiguity, and practically no regional variation, to be found in the disillusionment of our population with its current leadership, nor can their call for honour, responsiveness, and governance in accordance with their fundamental values be misinterpreted.

### ***Ensuring Responsiveness***

Many of the Canadians who spoke to the Forum about leadership issues are concerned with the constraints placed on their elected representatives which prevent them from being responsive to their constituents' wishes. There is a widespread perception that the work of parliament has little meaning, since the government controls parliament and other elected representatives have little or no opportunity for significant input. Forum participants have told us that, were they to believe that the government of the day is doing things which they have voted on and approved, this might be tolerable. As it is, the actions of the government, once in power, seem to bear little resemblance to the party platform in an election campaign. Major government policies are developed and enacted during a mandate which either were never mentioned or received little attention during a campaign. In the words of one participant, *"...people feel there is a lack of significant communication between the general population and the government, that politicians once elected do not act as if accountable to the people."*

Consequently, since election campaigns do not constitute a vote by the people on these policies, and since elected representatives seem to have little or no influence or freedom to represent constituents' views, there is a perceived need for mechanisms which will (a) require members of parliament to consult their constituents on major issues; and, (b) either give them more freedom, or require them to vote according to their constituents' wishes. A group in Ontario reflected the consensus of most Forum discussions in reporting:

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***"The people who haven't got the message...are the politicians, particularly our Prime Minister..."***

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***"...there is a lack of significant communication between the general population and the government..."***

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**"...We must have a system whereby our elected representatives truly represent and reflect the wishes of their constituents."**

*"The government must be changed. We must have a system whereby our elected representatives truly represent and reflect the wishes of their constituents."*

Mechanisms in both these areas were often specifically recommended by Forum participants. Participants' support much more use of free votes and for the relaxation of party discipline, which is perceived as a major constraint on the effectiveness of elected officials in representing constituents' views and in controlling a government agenda which may be out of touch with citizens' concerns.

A group in Ontario reflected the widespread desire for more citizen involvement: *"...the blind adherence to party discipline that is required of our MPs has turned the House of Commons into a House of Puppets...The often repeated argument 'I was elected to make decisions and do not need the opinions of constituents' is not acceptable in a modern country with a highly educated population."* A participant in Nova Scotia told us, *"We need more 'free votes' and less following party line. An MP does not have the freedom to reflect his/her constituents' wishes. The MP brings the message from Ottawa to his riding. The message must go from the riding to Ottawa!!!"* A correspondent from Alberta said, *"I would like to vote into parliament the representative I feel will do the best job for me. However, that particular individual may belong to the wrong party...If I vote according to party, I automatically sanction all issues on that particular platform, whether or not I actually agree with them."*

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**"We need more 'free votes' and less following party line...The message must go from the riding to Ottawa!!!"**

Another participant echoed this view in saying, *"The major flaw in our country today is the abuse of democracy so prevalent at both federal and provincial levels. Our politicians are not listening to us, but are driven by party solidarity."* A participant in a Yukon group discussion said; *"We can speak only twice a decade. Then we must suffer the indignity of being told, 'The people of Canada have elected me therefore...' We have learned to distrust this method. It is not up to politicians to effect a change in the fabric of the country...They must listen to the people rather than a battery of advisors. This cannot be done by polls. Socrates demonstrated that questions predict answers."*

Another suggestion which was often made was for members of parliament to be required to consult constituents on issues and to vote according to the views received. As a correspondent from Saskatchewan put it, *"Our elected members of Parliament should be forced to comply with their regional voters' wishes, not with their conscience or party affiliation."* A British Columbian said, *"MPs who are elected should answer to their constituents and in the Commons according to the majority consensus of their constituents in matters of national importance."*

A significant number of participants — including junior and senior high school students — proposed limitations on the number of terms of office an elected official could hold. *"The office of Prime Minister must be so set up that no person be allowed any more than two successive terms,"* said a letter from Newfoundland, *"because after that they tend to ignore the public and think they rule by divine right."*

Ensuring responsiveness at a more regional level was generally the rationale for those who recommended reform of the Senate. However, specific positions were less clear. While many suggested an elected or differently-appointed Senate which would help equalize regional political power bases, a considerable number of participants also recommended the Senate's abolition altogether. Participants outside Quebec were more concerned with Senate reform than others:

*"The most obvious change that is required immediately is the Senate...The Senators should be elected and there should be equal representation from each province regardless of population size." (New Brunswick)*

*"The senate as presently constituted, except on rare occasions, is probably more expensive than it is worth; yet Parliament over the past twenty years has lost enough of its power to delay bad legislation that some sort of check or balance is necessary, or a majority government can do immense damage. An elected, equal and more effective senate, qualified on the basis of citizenship, with no party allegiance, elected for a period of 8 years." (Ontario)*

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***"Our elected members of Parliament should be forced to comply with their regional voters' wishes, not with their conscience or party affiliation."***

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***"...Senators should be elected and there should be equal representation from each province..."***

*“Senators should not be from parties in power, they should be elected by the people.” (Alberta)*

*“The Senate, which has been a real drain on the taxpayers of this country and becoming more so, should be abolished. If a senate is necessary let it be elected from every province in much reduced numbers.” (British Columbia)*

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**“...If a senate is necessary let it be elected from every province...”**

On the topic of Senate reform, many participants had negative comments about the appointment of additional senators to deal with the Goods and Services Tax legislation, or about the behaviour of senators during that debate. *“The debauchery in the Senate over the G.S.T. was beneath civilized behaviour,”* said a participant from Ontario. *“It only proved how useless the senate is to-day.”* A contributor from British Columbia told us, *“About the only good thing I can say about the present federal government is that John Fraser told the Senate that they cannot get \$163.00 for showing up for work.”*

Although Senate reform or abolition were mentioned by a considerable number of participants, most did not consider it a complete solution to the problems they identified; other mechanisms as described in this section were also very often included.

### ***Ensuring Accountability***

If elected representatives do not respond to the call to be more responsive to the wishes of their constituents, participants are adamant that there must be ways to discipline them more frequently than every four or five years. Specifically, we have received many recommendations for a mechanism by which an MP can be recalled following a petition signed by an adequate number of his or her constituents. There have also been many calls for a mechanism by which an incumbent prime minister can be removed from office by the citizens directly rather than by his or her political party membership.

A letter from British Columbia summarized succinctly the views of many in saying, *“Elected representatives must be more accountable to the voters or recall*

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**“...The citizens should have the power to recall a member if he fails to act in the interests of the country...”**

and replace them.” Another felt that *“The wishes of the citizens are becoming less important to the Members of Parliament than their own personal desires and wishes. The citizens should have the power to recall a member if he fails to act in the interests of the country and fails to present bills or argue for the rights and betterment of the citizenry and the country.”* An Ontarian told the Forum that, *“The constitution must be amended to provide a way to impeach politicians who do not carry out the wishes of their constituents. If they are not carrying out their constituents’ mandates they must be replaced.”* Another expressed with passion the sentiments shared by many participants in saying, *“As for the government itself, recall and direct responsibility to the electorate should be implemented. You do not rule us, you work for us. Stop being so secretive, try honesty and straightforwardness. The people of this country are thirsting for an honest government.”*

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***“...provide a way to impeach politicians...”***

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***“...recall and direct responsibility to the electorate should be implemented...”***

### ***Direct Citizen Participation***

The third element of political reform for which Forum participants are expressing a desire is a mechanism or mechanisms for direct citizen participation in important decisions affecting their lives. As a group in Quebec told us: *“The opinions and comments of individuals concerning ‘their’ country and its future should be considered. It is time the individual becomes actively involved in the future of Canada and not leave it to the politicians!”*

Much of this concern focuses around processes of constitutional reform — the desire for a more open, public, democratic process — but it also extends, with almost equal weight, to other important policies. As noted earlier, changes which provide for a more open, responsive government may diminish the demand for direct citizen participation in decision making. However, in the absence of such changes, and, in some cases, in addition to them, a number of mechanisms have been suggested. The two most popular were more use of referenda on major policy issues and a constituent assembly or other extra-parliamentary mechanism for constitutional reform. *“Citizen-initiated referenda to make Members of Parliament accountable to their con-*

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***“Citizen-initiated referenda to make Members of Parliament accountable to their constituents...”***

*stituents would be an excellent check on extravagances,”* we heard from a participant in Ontario. *“Set up a constituent assembly independent of government, with equitable representation from each province (or region) and territory, and from aboriginal groups,”* we were told in a letter from Nova Scotia, which went on to say, *“Put an end to executive federalism!”* The mechanisms, however, seem less important than the will of government itself to govern in accordance with the citizens’ expressed desires and values.

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***“...Canadians desire a democracy which allows greater participation....”***

A participant from British Columbia provided a comment which summarizes the underlying aspirations of many who are requesting the changes set forth in this section. In summing up why changes were necessary, this participant said, *“Canadians seek more than just a stable government and a buoyant economy; they desire a more adequate democracy. Canadians desire a democracy which allows greater participation. They desire a democracy that no longer excludes certain groups from their rightful place in our rich heritage and society. They desire a democracy that is centred upon a belief in equality, justice and co-operation.”* Citizens who spoke to the Forum have told us, very clearly, that a renewed democracy is vital to their continued faith in their nation.

## **10. Conclusion**

When we began our consultations many people doubted the Forum process and wondered whether what they said would actually be heard. No part of the country was any more doubtful than another in this respect; citizens in all areas of Canada expressed the same hesitations and concerns.

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***“I have recently participated in a local forum, and feel very positive about the experience...”***

As we reported in Part I, by the end of our consultations we were overwhelmed by the citizens’ reaction to the Forum itself and especially to our discussion groups. Here, we will let the voices of participants be heard on the Forum itself and on citizen participation more generally.

## **On the Forum**

*"I was happy that Inuit were asked to take part."  
(Northwest Territories)*

*"I have recently participated in a local forum, and feel very positive about the experience. The opportunity to have input to the country's future, in such an immediate sense, seemed to inspire lively discussion among the sixteen participants, and a surprising degree of consensus." (British Columbia)*

*"This very forum is viewed by many Westerners as a cynical exercise in public relations rather than a purposeful study." (British Columbia)*

*"Please find attached the submission of myself and fifteen other friends and neighbours. The interesting thing about the signatories is that they are not the kind of people who rush out to public meetings of any kind, and would be reluctant to speak out at any but the smallest gatherings. We all share a deep and abiding love of Canada, and a sense of urgency that a massive healing process must begin soon." (Ontario)*

*"I must confess to a sense of futility about this process, since I find it hard to believe that the present government of Canada will listen to any of the citizens of the country." (Ontario)*

*"(What did members of the group indicate they were willing to do...) Be more involved. Participate in the Citizens' Forum. (For several, this was the most political activity of their lives.)" (Quebec)*

*"The Forum should address the growing sense of powerlessness of Canadians, who no longer (and in some cases, never did) feel confident of the government's commitment to its people, or of its ability to lead." (New Brunswick)*

*"It was the unanimous consensus that if we had to spend \$27 million annually on this Forum as opposed to an annual \$295 million on Parliament...and if the distillation of an annual Forum were by law imperative of implementation, we would opt for a permanent Forum." (Newfoundland)*

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**"This very forum is...a cynical exercise in public relations..."**

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**"...if we had to spend \$27 million annually on this Forum as opposed to an annual \$295 million on Parliament...would opt for a permanent Forum."**

*"I resent the fact that a government must go out and 'test' the mood of the citizens whom it governs. Appointing a Commission 'from on high' is not only a recognition of the separation of government and community, it is a manifestation of the abuse which has generated such a division. These philosophical objections, however, are insufficient to excuse non-participation; the goals of your Commission are too important to ignore." (Newfoundland)*

### ***On Speaking Out for Canada***

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***"...Canada is well worth fighting for."***

*"The Federal government has been too quiet and timid for decades which allowed the politicians of Quebec to become too dictatorial. Now, since all Canada seems to be waking up you can't stop talking about it anymore, please hammer away at it day by day until the referendum or next election, as long as there is hope. Canada is well worth fighting for." (Quebec)*

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***"...Canadians from all walks of life are not and will never be willing to let this country go down the drain without so much as a whimper."***

*"We must ensure that this land called Canada is here for the next ten thousand years and beyond. This is what I want and this is what my family wants. This I am willing to stand up and be counted for. One vote, one voice, one Canadian. If I am the only voice then we are in a sorry state. I think not. Canadians from all walks of life are not and will never be willing to let this country go down the drain without so much as a whimper." (Ontario)*

*"I am a seventy-two year old white, Anglo-Saxon Canadian...I will send a copy of this letter to Prime Minister B. Mulroney, Premier Bob Rae, Premier Clyde Wells, Audrey McLaughlin, Jean Chretien, and my local representative...This is a sacrifice on my part as I live on pensions and I realize one or all copies might never be read by anyone except the mail clerk, but you will not be able to report the people don't care." (Ontario)*

*"The most salient idea running through the whole discussion was the need for individuals to have a stronger voice in the decisions affecting their lives, region and country." (Ontario)*

*"Make the young people in Canada proud, WE ARE THE FUTURE and if something isn't changed, there won't be much of a future." (Saskatchewan high school group)*

*"Still the greatest country. Let's ask what we can do for Canada, not what can Canada do for me. Let's work to make it great." (Alberta)*

*"In conclusion, as far as my input having any effect...I rate my effort's chances even lower than yours, but at least I have tried. I believe it is every citizen's right, duty and indeed obligation to make an effort in this matter; otherwise we do not deserve the benefits of living in this country." (British Columbia)*

*"We would be willing to make financial sacrifices if these were equitably borne by individuals, industry, and government. We would be prepared to devote time and effort in any cause that would strengthen Canadian unity. (a summation of 4 months' discussion by a group of eight adults who met in each other's homes every two weeks." (British Columbia)*

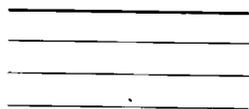
We hope Forum participants have heard their own voices in this part on "What we Heard." Let the people speak one more time — through the voices of a junior high school class in Saskatchewan, whose desire mirrors the other Canadians who are speaking to their government through this Forum:

*"We can try to make the adults listen to us and we can tell them what we think and then maybe they will consider it and not only think about themselves all the time. And maybe the Prime Minister and all the important people might listen to us for a change and maybe Canada will become a better place."*

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**"Make the young people in Canada proud, WE ARE THE FUTURE..."**

# Part III



**What we think of  
what we heard**

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## 1. Introduction

Participants spoke to us from the heart.

They had a great deal to say. As we have seen in Part II, they talked about their country and its future; they talked about their political leaders and the media. They talked, at times with passion, about their concerns, their frustrations, their aspirations for themselves and for their children.

They hoped we would carry their message to their fellow citizens and to their political leaders.

From an initial stance of understandable cynicism and distrust toward us, some 400,000 people have fastened on the Forum as giving them some hope that their views will be received, will be heard, and will be acted on.

We have tried in Part II to report faithfully what participants have told us without any observation, comment or interjection on our part, so that the full weight of our respondents' message would remain undisturbed. Part II is indeed the voice of participants.

This part is the commissioners' voice. And we must tell you clearly: Canada is in a crisis. This is a crisis identified and experienced by the people of Canada as immediately as a drought affects a farmer. This is a crisis of identity, a crisis of understanding, a crisis of leadership. We have arrived at this conclusion not because participants used the word crisis — few of them did — but because what they told us adds up, mercilessly, to this conclusion.

Each one of us has been profoundly affected by the Forum's experience. We have come to know our country and our fellow citizens much better through listening and talking to participants. In this part, we want to share with participants and other fellow citizens the thoughts that come to our mind as this extraordinary adventure of rediscovering our country draws to a close.

As we reflect on the experience of the last eight months, there is one thing that is striking: how united we have found participants in their view of our political leaders, whom at present they do not trust; in their view as well of the media, which they see as playing a divi-

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sive role at this critical juncture of our country's history; in their demand to be more involved in the process that will define Canada's future.

We were struck to see how much — by their own admission — participants from all regions and language groups lack knowledge of some of the issues they discussed that can shape the future of their country.

But truly the most arresting thing of all, emerging from what participants told us, is this: a tension between their search for unity and the claims of various groups and collectivities is perceived as posing great threats to their sense of being a country.

What immediately triggered the Citizens' Forum was the failure of the Meech Lake accord and the ensuing despair of French-speaking Quebeckers that they can achieve equality, respect and security within Canada. If their cultural originality and different needs cannot be accommodated within a rethought and renewed relationship, then the Québécois may well separate themselves from the current structure and pursue their destiny independently, with or without association with what remains of Canada. This was not the course that most of our Quebec participants preferred — but the course many indicated they would indeed follow, unless changes were agreed to that would make them feel more comfortable within the Canadian family.

Most participants outside Quebec, while strongly preferring Quebec to stay, have made it equally clear: if Quebec wishes to go, the break must be clean, complete and final. They express little or no interest in any significant form of association with an independent Quebec. Given the pressures that a Canada without Quebec would face, it is certainly possible — some say probable — that within a few years Canada without Quebec would cease to exist.

But there are other points of tension also. The place of Canada's aboriginal peoples in the constitution has yet to be resolved in a mutually satisfactory manner. Their quest for self-government has raised the question in the minds of many participants whether it can be accommodated within their sense of being one country. And there are also many longstanding aboriginal peoples' land claims. For many of the participants this

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is a moral issue, purely and simply a question of justice. They feel strongly these claims must be resolved: swiftly, sensitively, equitably. But they realized that it is also an extremely complex practical issue. Settling these many claims and righting the many wrongs raise questions and have consequences that most Canadians simply don't yet understand. Participants demonstrated a great deal of goodwill, but this could dissipate if the consequences of redress are not well explained and thoroughly understood.

There are still more stress points. Participants attached great value to Canada's multicultural heritage, yet at the same time many have expressed great concern about our emphasizing our differences too much, to the point of threatening our unity.

Similarly, many participants claimed that Canada's official languages policy is divisive and they harshly criticized the way it is implemented. Yet representatives of our official languages minority groups have protested that their rights are not recognized and enforced.

All these issues — Quebec, our aboriginal peoples, cultural diversity and official languages — raise a very fundamental question: Who are we Canadians? What is it that makes us distinct and special among the nations of the world?

In 1867, the Fathers of Confederation agreed to create a new country, under a federal form of government, based on a recognition of the linguistic, cultural and religious diversity of the peoples involved. These were people of vision who wanted to build a unique country, truly different from their great neighbour to the south. Unlike the framers of the United States' constitution, they took specific steps for constitutional protection of collective rights and the two official languages. The acceptance of diversity as a source of pride and richness was to be the cornerstone of the new state.

Will the Canada of 1992 continue to be founded on respect for all of its diverse peoples? Will Quebec, and will French — the language of the majority of its people — continue, as was the case in 1867, to be recognized as distinct characteristics of Canada? Will we be able at long last, to provide our aboriginal peoples with their rightful place in our constitution and recognize

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their just claim for institutions of their own in ways that will honour their quest for dignity and respect? Will we be able to strike a more effective balance between our search for better integration of new Canadians in our society and our respect for cultural differences?

In other words, is the Canada of 1992 to be rebuilt in the same spirit that led to its creation in 1867? It appears to us to be the fundamental question that participants have raised and must be addressed by those who care about the future of this country.

Our own response to the question is a resounding “yes” based on a conviction that all Canadians, from Atlantic to Pacific to Arctic seas will benefit socially, culturally, economically, from a revitalized federation that will recognize the diversity and different needs of its many peoples.

## **2. Steps towards building a new Canada**

With some amazement we discovered, as we have seen in Part II, how much participants share in basic values, regardless of language or region, that help to identify them and set them apart from their ancestral societies — other than the aboriginal peoples — and from our neighbours on this continent.

We must build on these shared values as we proceed to revitalize our country. Acceptance of diversity is for Canadians a primary value, even if we honour it more than observe it faithfully. The commitment to diversity goes back to the origins of Canada, as we have seen.

And while we have had — and still have — our share of intolerance and bigotry, most Canadians look upon these as a source of shame. Freedom and dignity in diversity is a value we all esteem, even if it is not always attained.

The participants, regardless of region or language, cherish in particular our democratic freedoms and liberties, and our self-image as non-violent peoples.

We have a deep commitment to the environment, and are willing to give up some material prosperity to help preserve it.

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All Canadians share in democratic parliamentary institutions that we have adapted over the course of time to suit our particular situations and needs. We all see a role for our governments in guiding our economies and pursuing our cultural welfare, just as we all feel great pride in Canada's positive image in the world and successes abroad.

We all share in a commitment to fairness made real by our social programs — health care, education, old age security, protection against unemployment. And Canadians' commitment to fairness is reflected in their desire for justice for the aboriginal First Nations.

This is indeed an impressive array of common, shared values.

But we must also look at the contradictions and puzzles we have found in some of the things participants said they value.

Equality is a case in point. But what do they mean by equality?

They stressed equality among provinces — including Quebec — apparently without knowing or recognizing that provinces are not perfectly equal, and never have been.

Our provinces joined confederation at different times on different terms. Bilingualism was established by our constitution in parliament and the legislatures of Manitoba and Quebec, but not others; denominational school rights were established in Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland, but not in other provinces; there was a provision for a special property and civil rights regime for Quebec, different from the requirement in other provinces. There are special provisions in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that apply only to Quebec — and others that apply only to Newfoundland — to suit particular circumstances and needs. British Columbia joined Canada with the promise of a transcontinental railway.

Thus, the notion of equality of the provinces is neither as absolute nor as unbending as some of the participants seem to believe.

Another case in point is how to reconcile Quebec's insistence for a major realignment of government powers and responsibilities with participants' clearly ex-

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pressed preference — at least of those outside Quebec — for a strong central government. At the same time, there is plainly support for the view that Quebec has a distinct, unique presence in the Canadian family that our constitutional arrangements can and must accommodate.

Those who wish to see a stronger but leaner central government are also crying for national efficiency, the elimination of waste, and what is seen as duplication and overlap of federal-provincial jurisdictions. And there are those who wish to see a distribution of powers between federal and provincial authorities that is more functional, and that clearly recognizes that provincial governments are, in many instances, able to respond to the citizens' needs better than a distant federal government.

We must also somehow reconcile two very different elements of nation-building: the power of shared mythology or symbols, with the effectiveness of genuine, pragmatic programs. These are inevitably intertwined, as our transportation and communications systems have so effectively displayed. We have to understand that the pragmatic demands of managing programs — closing a rural post office — can have symbolic consequences far more powerful than any effect on the bottom line. But we must also recognize that innovative, sensible programs that engage Canadians in accord with their values may be a key to effective nation-building.

Whatever our future directions, we must ensure that fundamental Canadian values are not jeopardized. They must be considered in planning from the start. Our consultations have made it clear: Canadians will no longer take matters on trust. They want to be persuaded that government initiatives will not cut across the values they cherish. Otherwise, we must wonder whether Canada will still be governable.

In the face of these contradictions and puzzles, revitalizing our federation presents a major challenge.

The genius of the federal form of government is its almost unlimited flexibility, its suppleness. Countries that have adopted this form of government, like Swit-

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zerland, the United States, Germany, or Australia, have adapted it to suit their unique needs and circumstances.

The crafters of a new federation, like the Fathers of the original one, will be called on to be bold, imaginative, and determined to let nothing stand in the way of a responsible, honourable compromise acceptable to all the federation's members.

### **3. The costs of Quebec independence**

We must be very clear. Failure to deal with these contradictions and puzzles will be fatal to Canada's survival. There is an economic cost of which people on both sides of the unity issue — inside and outside Quebec — are by their own admission, shockingly ill-informed. With the departure of Quebec, all of us would be poorer. We need to know how much poorer, and why, and for how long.

Internationally, we would be weaker. Our status in the world is based on our being seen as a mediating, peacemaking, moderate force, much of whose moral credit comes from reconciling different cultures. That status would be grievously damaged. Further, two smaller nations would lack the influence of a larger one. Canada is at present a member of the G7, the group of the world's seven strongest economies which broadly sets the world's economic agenda. Neither Quebec nor a Canada without Quebec would qualify for G7 membership.

And our weight in a host of international organizations — the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization of American States, the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, and many more — would be much diminished. Our capacity for international aid, in which many take justifiable pride, would be severely limited by the increased economic needs of a separate Canada and Quebec.

Prosperity would depend on Quebec and a leftover Canada arriving quickly at some sort of new arrangement. But the chances of this would be poisoned if the parting were rancorous, as it likely would be. In any

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event, no matter how amicable, the sum of the parts would not add up to the existing whole for a long time to come.

And there would be a major instability within the residual Canada. The dominance of Ontario, the maintenance of the economic union, the status of international trade and financial arrangements — these would become immediate and overwhelming issues the day after Quebec separation.

Canada without Quebec would be subject to possibly intolerable pressures to fissure along north/south lines. And we need be in no doubt: the various provinces and regions, if driven in despair to join the United States, would do so as supplicants. They would be in no position to dictate terms. We would be foolish to expect charity.

Governments — and every Canadian — must think much more, and much more deeply, about all this.

#### **4. Failure to respond to aboriginal needs**

There is an anger, a rage, building in aboriginal communities that will not tolerate much longer the historic paternalism, the bureaucratic evasion and the widespread lack of respect for their concerns. Failure to deal promptly with the needs and aspirations of aboriginal peoples will breed strife that could polarize opinion and make solutions more difficult to achieve.

Consensus among the Forum's non-aboriginal participants is astonishing, verging on unanimity. They tell us that aboriginal peoples in Canada have been unfairly treated, that this has besmirched our international reputation, and that it offends our collective principles of caring and fairness. They are somewhat reluctant to engage in detailed discussion of self-government and land claims, citing lack of understanding on complex issues. They consider that the federal government in particular must resolve these issues with the aboriginal leadership.

Gandhi said that you can judge a civilization by the way it treats its poorest citizens. The forceful moral dimensions of the challenge presented by aboriginal peoples give these issues a special place. How we resolve

them will decide our future as a country that can stand in the world with pride.

## 5. Findings and suggestions

On some issues, the consensus of Forum participants is clear. We will now (indicated in bold type) offer some opinions and suggestions rooted in citizens' views to address what we believe are the central problems. On other issues — many specific dilemmas facing Canadian government and society — no one yet has the detailed answers. Certainly, we do not. Many of these demand expert advice and research, and far more time than the eight months we had.

### *Canada's Identity*

Canadians see their country as prosperous, peaceful, tolerant, quiet, pristine and beautiful. If we were to open our borders to greater immigration, we would very rapidly hit whatever annual maximum we cared to set. And we would still have the problem of illegal immigration. In a world where most countries have large numbers of citizens wanting out, Canada is a country where millions of people desperately want to get in, sometimes even if it means risking life. Surely these people can't all be mistaken.

We have not, as Canadians, depended much on words to remind us of who we are. We do not recite oaths of allegiance. At least outside Quebec, we are not taught to quote the speeches of former political leaders, no matter how eloquent. None of us knows by memory the first words of our constitution. Perhaps we should. Perhaps in the search for constitutional renewal we should take time to find the words that will help to bind us, to remind us of what we have in common, of what we cherish. They should be modest and quiet, but they should resonate to that most central of values we all share: freedom and dignity in diversity.

Participants frequently and loudly told us they were dismayed at the government's perceived weakening of national institutions and symbols. This complaint ran the gamut from VIA Rail (for many outside Quebec) to

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***"My hope ... is for a unified, democratic, environmentally safe and peaceful country ... where people feel comfortable with each other, are tolerant and understanding... and where each person recognizes they have the same opportunities, responsibilities and privileges." (British Columbia)***

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***"We have a wonderful country. Canadians ... forget to notice all the benefits — freedom, tolerance, freedom to criticize the government, wonderful countryside and wilderness areas." (Nova Scotia)***

the CBC (for many in Quebec, and for English-speaking artists, intellectuals, many rural Canadians, aboriginal peoples and people wanting news from a national perspective) to turbans in the RCMP and to the Post Office, especially rural offices.

**We urge the government to review and coordinate its thinking on the whole range of national institutions and symbols — especially those with communications or historic value — to give them more evident importance, and to avoid the impression among Canadians that they are losing their sense of country. In some cases such rethinking may mean merely better explanations, in others changes of policy. But since perception is reality, the government cannot ignore this issue without further destabilizing or weakening citizens' feeling of Canadian unity, especially among English-speaking Canadians.**

**Anyone trying to frame a new constitution should seriously consider a constitutional preamble enshrining simple, eloquent words that explain Canada's past, its identity and values, and Canadians' free commitment to the future.**

### *Quebec*

Among the issues of most concern to the Canadians who spoke to the Forum, Quebec and its role in Canada's future was of central importance. The great majority of citizens outside Quebec want Quebec to stay in the Canadian family — but not at any price. Even some proclaimed sovereigntists among our relatively small number of French-speaking Quebec participants spoke, often reluctantly, of preferring to work out a solution within some kind of Canada, but doubted this could be accomplished.

In this crucial area, as in so many others, Canadians both inside and outside Quebec admit they are grievously hampered by lack of knowledge: knowledge of our land, of our history, of our economic reality, of our fellow citizens — ultimately, of the hopes, fears and interests of other Canadians. For many people in Canada, the sheer size of the country precludes knowing the

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***"It is clear that the rest of Canada does not want us. It is therefore time for us to affirm ourselves." (Quebec)***

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***"Without Quebec and their French language I would feel lost as a Canadian." (Ontario)***

land extensively. While a number of popular historians have tried to broaden our knowledge of our history, it is clear that our schools have failed to teach many basic facts about the "other" Canada. Outside Quebec, the history of Quebec is little known. Inside Quebec, the history of other parts of Canada is equally untaught and equally unknown.

And it is frighteningly clear, all across Canada, that the economic consequences of Quebec separation are not appreciated in terms of what it would really mean for Canada and Quebec. We heard concern and uncertainty; vague threats and ultimatums, often with a flavour of bluff; and impatience and wounded pride.

Everywhere, with both Quebeckers and non-Quebeckers, we found an appalling and dangerous lack of knowledge of each other. Politicians and political journalists can cast deforming shadows, eclipsing the reality of ordinary human beings. Yet we found among participants an often hesitant eagerness to know real people from the "other" side. When the Forum was able to bring people together, by television or radio or in person, even these few brief contacts were seized on with hope and pleasure.

Further, we can say that — providing the word "distinct" does not mean "superior" or "superiorly entitled" — the expression "distinct society" as a description of Quebec seemed acceptable to some Forum participants. With a little probing, quite a few agreed that if "distinct" really meant "different but broadly equal," they could, in effect, echo "Vive la différence!"

As noted earlier, few participants knew that provinces are in fact not perfectly equal — that their various special needs were recognized when they joined confederation. Nor did they necessarily consider whether other parts of Canada might not have special needs in the future. So, we found ourselves going beyond what we were told. Just as we weighed what the people told us and concluded that Canada was in crisis, so we have weighed the options and concluded that perfect equality does not exist between provinces and never has, for the excellent reason that special needs must be met. Many provinces have a strong interest in offshore fisheries, for example — and arguably some have special needs

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***"If no one gives, if no one finds the solution, we will have the right to dismember the country: a situation much more disastrous than the balkanization of which some are quick to accuse us." (Quebec)***

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***"If Quebec left it would be a humiliation and it would be psychologically devastating. We show the rest of the world we can live together — it is the basis of our own multicultural society. (British Columbia)"***

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— but it would be difficult to argue that special needs in offshore fisheries exist in Saskatchewan.

Given that provinces have entered confederation on different terms and operate under different provisions, we believe that special arrangements in provinces based on special needs *are a fundamental principle of Canadian federalism*. This principle would apply where needed to all provinces.

Within the Quebec context, we believe that if Canadians can be persuaded to place the emphasis on equity in the face of specific needs, then people outside Quebec could accept that Quebec should have the freedom and means to be itself — a unique society with its own distinctive place in a renewed Canadian family.

We recognize, among these specific needs, the vital importance for Quebecers of maintaining their French language and culture. We also recognize that English-speaking Quebecers receive constitutional guarantees of language rights which French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec do not have, except in Manitoba — and in New Brunswick, where constitutional guarantees go even further.

If the Canadian people can be persuaded to accept constitutional changes that would help Quebec to increase the protection of its language and culture, then we believe this in turn could lead to a greater willingness within Quebec to reform Bill 178, which is perceived outside Quebec as discriminatory.

We believe Canadians wish to be better informed about the possible consequences, for both Quebec and the rest of Canada, of Quebec independence. We believe that the federal and provincial governments, and the private sector, should take steps to ensure that all Canadians are made aware of the economic, political, social and international consequences of Quebec independence.

## **Official Languages**

We have heard much discussion of “bilingualism” — a word with many meanings. It is vital to distinguish among them: for example, the federal government serving each citizen in his or her preferred official language (that is, serving them in the one they are taxed in); making it possible for people to work for the federal government in their preferred language; bilingual signs where really needed or posted for symbolic reasons; French immersion; grants to Quebec to assist English-language education; youth language exchanges; civil service language training that is more or less appropriate; or the notorious bilingual Corn Flakes box initiated by W.F. Kellogg in the 1920s for apparently sensible commercial reasons.

We must also recognize that although French and English are official languages federally, there are other needs. Aboriginal languages are necessarily official throughout the north. And we must understand that other than in Quebec and New Brunswick, official language status provides an essential symbolic reassurance to francophones in other provinces that their plight is not hopeless, and that they can look to Canada to safeguard their efforts towards cultural well-being.

Canada’s use of two official languages is widely seen as a fundamental and distinctive Canadian characteristic. Among many, especially the young, the ability to speak, read and write both French and English is accepted as a significant personal advantage. Even many parents who dislike “official bilingualism” are eager to enrol their children in French immersion.

On the other hand, we find that the application of the official languages policy is a major irritant outside Quebec, and not much appreciated inside Quebec. People outside Quebec saw with alarm that province’s banning of languages other than French on public signs. They suffered a dramatic loss of faith in the equity of official bilingualism, because it seemed to them to make it a one-way street — even though English-speaking Quebecers enjoy many constitutional protections and have institutions for which there are few counter-

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***“The concept of bilingualism is also very much worth saving. It enriches us all, it defines Canada and it has made huge strides in recent years .... However, it needs to be more clearly understood that bilingualism does not mean that everyone has to be able to speak both languages.”***  
***(Quebec)***

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***“The cost of bilingualism with all its bonuses, grants and duplication is totally unproductive.”***  
***(Saskatchewan)***

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***“We don’t mind the two languages, but we feel it isn’t fair that it is mandatory.”*** ***(New Brunswick)***

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***"If ... there are two official languages in Canada ... it should be mandatory that both languages be taught starting in the first grade in all schools ... from coast to coast."***  
***(Ontario)***

parts for French-speaking citizens elsewhere in Canada, other than New Brunswick.

In spite of real and needed progress in linguistic fair play in federal institutions, a sometimes mechanical, overzealous, and unreasonably costly approach to the policy has led to decisions that have helped bring it into disrepute. Citizens tell us that bilingual bonuses, costly translation of technical manuals of very limited use, public servants' low use of hard-acquired French-language training, excessive designation of bilingual jobs, and a sometimes narrow, legalistic approach are sapping a principle which they would otherwise welcome as part of Canada's basic identity.

These weaknesses are creating a public perception of the policy which, in the absence of more positive information, inflates its real defects and errors.

**An independent review of the application of the official languages policy is badly needed to clear the air — with a view to ensuring that it is fair and sensible. Otherwise, there is a risk that rising public dissatisfaction and misunderstanding will lead to rejection of the policy as a whole, with irreparable damage to the principle — that should command universal acceptance — of linguistic equality in federal institutions. One purpose of the review should be to make clear to Canadians the costs and benefits of official languages policy and activities, and explain far more clearly its goals and methods. Such a review should evaluate public information efforts as well as investigate all the public's expressed concerns.**

In addition, Canadians expressed strong and positive views about our two official languages and their children.

**We believe that all children should have the opportunity to learn both official languages in school.**

### ***Aboriginal peoples***

Canadians want justice for the aboriginal peoples. On this, there is an astonishingly high degree of consensus — although also a potentially harmful ignorance of the

realities of aboriginal people's aspirations. We are glad that the federal government has recognized that significant action is urgently needed, before the situation worsens, and is taking steps to set up a royal commission.

Forum participants stated a clear desire to see longstanding territorial and treaty claims resolved in the best moral, social, and economic interests of all Canadians. Further procrastination would serve only to increase the costs of settlements and exacerbate existing tensions between native and non-native communities. Further, such inaction would greatly damage Canada's international reputation.

In the interests of a more equitable Canada, Forum participants recognized the need for First Nations people to have greater control over decisions which affect their future. The government of Canada has, on previous occasions, spoken of increasing the self-sufficiency and self-respect of the aboriginal peoples through the enlargement of aboriginal capacity for self-government, within the framework of the Canadian constitution. The concept of First Nations self-government serves to promote native dignity, respect, and economic independence. It is a key factor in the future determination of First Nations people as a distinct group and must be included in a review of confederation.

**We join with the great majority of Canadians to demand prompt, fair settlement of the territorial and treaty claims of First Nations people, to secure their linguistic, cultural and spiritual needs in harmony with their environment.**

**We join with the Canadian people in their support for native self-government and believe that First Nations people should be actively involved in the definition and implementation of this concept.**

**We believe that the department administering Indian Affairs and the Indian Act should be phased out as self-government comes into reality.**

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***"We have not adequately recognized the rights of the peoples who were living in this territory when it was settled."  
(Quebec)***

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***"Treaties must be honoured in full. Land claims must be dealt with in good faith ..."  
(Ontario)***

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***"We do not believe that we have special rights but... different rights ... help Canadians understand aboriginal issues."  
(New Brunswick)***

**We believe that Canada should officially recognize the history and contribution of aboriginal peoples as the First Nations of Canada.**

### ***Cultural Diversity***

While Canadians accept and value Canada's cultural diversity, they do not value many of the activities of the multicultural program of the federal government. These are seen as expensive and divisive in that they remind Canadians of their different origins rather than their shared symbols, society and future.

Ethnocultural groups in Canada certainly wish their backgrounds to be respected; and we, like most Canadians, enthusiastically agree. But those who wish to preserve and promote their languages and culture are, by and large, willing to underwrite the costs themselves. And most Canadians think they should. They believe it's one thing to promote and cherish diversity, and another for governments to entrench and fund remembrance of ethnocultural origins.

In relations between ethnocultural communities, citizens see far more need in two areas: a) the clear, practical welcoming of newcomers into an evolving mainstream; and b) the reduction of racial discrimination through education and effective programs. Most citizens are concerned with what they think of as the much-needed better integration of newcomers: for example, eliminating long waiting lists for language training in English or French, social orientation, and assistance in transferring foreign degrees and qualifications to meet Canadian standards. Equally important is the need for employment equity for all Canadians.

Canada's ethnocultural people told the Forum that they want to play their full role in the country as equal members of society — no more and no less. Many of them feel they have not been treated historically as equals. They want to be treated as equals across the broad range of social activity: industry, media, government, the political process, decision making, and jobs.

Citizens spoke to us often of their desire to see a definition of being Canadian which can encompass the many different origins of our citizens.

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***"I speak as one whose heritage is basically north European — German, Russian, Danish and English — and I did not come to Canada to try to maintain those heritages, but to leave them behind and do what I could to be Canadian." (Ontario)***

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***"Except for the aboriginal people, we are all immigrants who brought their traditions to this country. This can cause tension, but it also makes for a richer and more interesting society." (Nova Scotia)***

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**We believe that federal government funding for multiculturalism activities other than those serving immigrant orientation, reduction of racial discrimination and promotion of equality should be eliminated, and the public funds saved be applied to these areas. The key goal of multiculturalism should be to welcome all Canadians to an evolving mainstream — and thus encourage real respect for diversity.**

The department of multiculturalism in fact has moved substantially in this direction in recent years. The bulk of its budget goes to help new Canadians and minority communities to play an active role in Canadian society, and also to promote more harmonious race relations and cross-cultural understanding.

But this new thrust of the department has not been explained to Canada's people, who believe its activities are promoting divisions between Canadians and doing so at the taxpayers' expense.

**We believe that the government should devise far clearer, bolder and more imaginative public information programs on the value and benefits of cultural diversity, explaining both the above refocusing and the enormous contribution of ethnocultural communities to Canada.**

**We believe that provincial education departments, perhaps sharing textbooks and methods more closely, should maintain some heritage courses, but only for young elementary-school immigrant children. Such courses should be concise and be given for no more than a year or so for each immigrant child, to assist young newcomers' transition to their new land's culture and society.**

### ***Our Lack of Knowledge***

We do not know enough about ourselves. Without a radically fresh approach to improving what we know about each other, our lack of knowledge of the basic realities of this country will continue to cripple efforts at accommodation. It will also leave such efforts ex-

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***"A massive education effort is now needed ... HELP US UNDERSTAND!"***  
***(Nova Scotia)***

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***"...we as Canadians should be better educated — our ignorance is the root of our evils."***  
***(Quebec)***

actly where citizens do not want them left: exclusively in the hands of elites, especially politicians and the mass media.

In the course of the Forum's work we have tried to expand public knowledge on key issues, but in the time available we could do little. A major responsibility rests with governments and the media. But some things are possible in which citizens can have a more direct hand.

Other nations — such as Sweden and France — have successfully developed programs to ensure that their citizens can know their own people and landscape better, and it is inexcusable that Canada should have virtually abandoned its efforts to do likewise.

**We believe that the federal government should work with the private sector, the educational sector and the voluntary sector (especially sports and cultural organizations) to bring forward plans, preferably jointly, to create once again a vigorous network of travel and exchange programs, emphasizing but not confined to young people.**

**We believe that a creative and innovative approach is needed to lessen the difficulties our geography imposes on Canadians in understanding and appreciating their country. We believe that the federal government should invite the travel industry to work out realistic and affordable plans to allow Canadians to visit other parts of Canada much more cheaply and conveniently.**

**We believe that Canadian students deserve a better understanding of their country's history, embracing all regions, at a much younger age. Such deeper understanding should include the history and cultures of aboriginal peoples and ethnocultural peoples. To that end, curriculum materials prepared in consultation with Canada's first peoples should ensure a fuller and historically more accurate description of the role of the aboriginal peoples in this country's history. Provinces outside Quebec should consider a common history curriculum, at least in part. They should explore with Quebec any further degree of**

coordination that respects the quite different pasts and perspectives.

### *Canada's Economy*

Citizens repeatedly raised the subject of the economy throughout the Forum process. Indeed, in many cases economic concerns ranked higher, and were pressed more insistently, than any other. Canadians are right to be concerned about their economy. Chronic deficits and a high and rising national debt have contributed to high interest rates. These, together with a high foreign exchange rate have caused job losses, lost exports, missed job-creating investment opportunities and a sharper cyclical downturn than necessary.

As well, these events have led to federal/provincial disputes over allocating the burden of government expenditures, as governments are forced to cut spending. Participants think political squabbles have worsened their concerns, and angered people who are mainly worried about their jobs and our values and traditions of sharing. Participants also worried about losing such cherished universal social security programs as health care and old-age pensions, or about seeing them weakened. They are right to be concerned. The burdens imposed by high tax rates and by competitive international investment and trade pressures must inevitably be relieved — one way or another.

Many participants still look to their governments to insulate them from international economic forces, despite the fact that many Canadian governments, including the federal government, have been emphasizing the need to adapt and adjust to market forces. Privatization, deregulation, the Free Trade Agreement, the Mexican trade initiative and reinforced attempts to achieve expanded General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade arrangements are all cases in point.

**As a result, many participants feel betrayed and bereft, and are confused and angry. Part of this is due to their sense that traditional Canadian values are being usurped by anonymous market forces and that governments are doing nothing to deal with these. Governments are in part responsible for these fears,**

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***"This country, with all its riches, should be economically Number One in the world, but it is slipping deeper behind." (Ontario)***

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***"We want our taxes to go to social programs, not corporate tax incentives ... one in four kids goes to school hungry in Newfoundland." (St. John's)***

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***"What concerns people now is whether they'll have a job tomorrow." (British Columbia)***

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**which we believe come from misunderstandings that governments must clarify — or continue to pay a heavy price for, as will our country.**

Canada is a nation because it shares values and strives to preserve and advance common purposes and objectives. Governments have always played a major role in achieving our goals. The success of their endeavours has elevated the role for governments within the national mythology to the level of a dearly held value.

To be sure, governments have operated cheek by jowl with market forces in our mixed economy. At various times, government-inspired influences and market influences have waxed and waned, as circumstances dictated. But the images of a transcontinental railway, of a national health plan and of a universal pension plan are deeply imbedded in the collective psyche of Canadians. Not only are participants troubled, as we have said, about the survival of existing programs. They are wondering about the role — if any — that governments are going to play in the future, to help them to continue to prosper as international competitive pressures relentlessly increase. They also want to know if and how their taxes will help reduce the national deficit.

**We believe governments must clarify these issues for Canadians. History plainly shows that governments have a constructive role to play redressing market imperfections, supplementing market initiatives, and preserving the country. They are the only entity which can house and nourish the widely shared values which give birth to our common purposes and objectives. Putting such actions in the broader world context that now prevails is among the most important challenges facing governments.**

At the other end of the spectrum, we would note, participants appear to be unrealistically optimistic about governments' ability to insulate them from the often dramatic ups and downs of international competition.

We believe these developments place the burden of responsibility on us all — the private sector, the labour movement, small entrepreneurs, skilled and unskilled individuals -to adapt and to invest our own time and our own efforts in ourselves, so that our society can compete. Only in this way can we continue to enjoy high living standards by producing goods and services which bring us all greater profits and prosperity.

### *Improving Federalism*

We were not charged with reinventing federalism or re-writing the constitution. But, based on participants' comments, we can offer some thoughts for making today's federalism work somewhat better.

In all parts of Canada, participants see overlapping government services as part of the problem, in that federal and provincial governments very often duplicate each other's activities — and thus spending — and for that reason are often inefficient. Further, citizens see governments as often too far from the people they serve. Also, there are challenges arising from globalization of the economy and its impact on our national needs and values.

Quebec is not alone in pressing for a streamlined and rebalanced division of powers between the federal and provincial levels. This viewpoint need not imply any wholesale move towards decentralization; nor does it necessitate the gutting of national standards nor the discrimination of citizens' social programs from one jurisdiction to the next. Rather, it requires that both levels of government place themselves unequivocally in a position to show the common taxpayer the most efficient use of any tax dollar.

In seeking to address these concerns, both levels of government must seek a greater degree of functionalism: who is in the best position to do what? Perhaps, quite often, policy can be established centrally — with serious provincial input — but *delivering* programs may best be done close to the people. This provides for equity and national standards, while ensuring flexibility to meet local conditions and needs.

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***“A loose federation of provinces would satisfy our particular needs. We still need a federal government for certain needs but avoid the present overlap ...”***  
***(British Columbia)***

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***“I want Canada to stay together. This requires a strong central government — there must be a national agenda particularly regarding the resources of our country, environment, education and medicare.”***  
***(British Columbia)***

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***“Simply transferring power en masse to the provinces will never solve our problems; it will only reinforce the regionalism that ... is at the root of our current problems.”***  
***(Nova Scotia)***

We heard much from participants about national standards, especially in education. This is a sensitive issue — especially in Quebec — because of traditional provincial jurisdiction, and we can only flag it as a challenge for future action. It cannot be neglected, however, because we can only hope to meet the effects of globalization with a workforce that is continuously upgraded and trained in new skills to internationally accepted levels.

A start can be made now at a serious, credible effort to address duplication and inefficiency.

**We believe that in its efforts at national renewal the federal government should place a high priority on working with other governments to eliminate, wherever possible, overlapping jurisdictions and programs, and to identify government efficiency as a major goal, bearing in mind that effectiveness can be increased by placing programs as close as is practical to the people.**

**Further, we believe that the federal government must ensure that fundamental social values and essential national institutions be protected in revising structures and processes necessary to achieve efficiency.**

### ***Leadership and Democracy***

Throughout the work of the Forum, participants constantly and urgently raised with us their fears and their anger about leadership and the process of government. In their anger, they denounced the existing political leadership.

Yet this anger is not merely directed at politicians. The mass media are equally swept up in it. Their interaction with politicians is seen as too often exaggerating a normal political adversarial system. One example is the media’s tendency to cover the House of Commons’ daily Question Period mainly for its posturing, theatrical value, instead of covering thoroughly the more demanding, yet revealing, committee meetings where MPs analyze proposed laws in detail.

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***“People rejected Meech Lake because it was a secretive, elitist process. Politicians have to learn they are elected to serve the people, not to help themselves to the spoils of power.”*** ***(New Brunswick)***

Participants went on to suggest an array of remedies, many of them new to, or rarely used in, our parliamentary system: referenda, impeachment, recall, proportional representation, free votes, an elected or abolished Senate, fixed or limited terms of office, the direct election of the prime minister, the convening of a constituent assembly. All originate in a desire for a more responsive and open political system, whose leaders — they think — are not merely accountable at election time but should be disciplined swiftly if they transgress greatly.

In an important sense, the failure of constitutional negotiations in the last decade points up an important aspect of the way our national political system works: its inadequacy in its present condition as a means for settling conflicts. Regions and factions within Canada inevitably disagree, but their conflicts are not seen to be resolved in the House of Commons. They are resolved in secret — in caucus rooms, Cabinet offices and federal-provincial conclaves. Canadians dislike secrecy.

Participants in the Forum know well that compromises must be made and deals struck. If they cannot see into the secret meetings, they can force their leaders in front of the cameras and microphones. But a price is paid for this rough contribution to direct accountability: sound bites and TV clips and the hunt for headline-making quotes may often trap politicians into even more gross simplification and confrontation than a healthy democracy demands.

Obviously, there is a need for the political system to respond better. That need is at the heart of our country's problem. Politicians must prove that the system can be more responsive. Otherwise, the pressure from citizens for radical changes to the system will become more insistent.

We heard that a constituent assembly followed by a national referendum on a new constitution would be attractive to many people. However, given the very wide variety of scenarios for that approach, we must as a group leave serious analysis of that method to specialists with more expertise and time than we have.

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***"We elect people to represent us to government. Instead, they wind up representing government to us. Something has gone wrong."  
(British Columbia)***

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We concur with the vast majority of Canadians who believe that the Senate should either be fundamentally reformed or abolished.

We join with Forum participants in deploring the mindless, and sometimes disgraceful, behaviour of members of both Houses in bringing the parliamentary system into disrepute. We agree with the Forum's participants who have pointed constantly to the fact that our system is too partisan and far too adversarial. In particular, we would urge a careful review of the Question Period and how it is organized, with an eye on the more productive Question Periods in other parliamentary systems.

We agree with the many Forum's participants who have pointed to the fact that our system is too subject to an iron party discipline. Shorter sessions so that members of parliament can spend more time listening to their constituents, more free votes — both should be seriously considered.

As earlier noted, a long menu of other possible changes in our way of governance was proposed by participants. We have not the expertise to analyze them. But given the large number of Canadians who have expressed interest in them, the government owes citizens the dignity of seriously considering their ideas.

We have found that the people of Canada have developed a great appetite for the kind of discussion and dialogue the Forum stimulated.

We think that the government, over the period of national rebuilding, should consider how it can best encourage and enrich the kind of dialogue started by the Forum and make use of some of the methods we have used.

The government should also consider using such methods on an on-going basis for major issues, or for any issues put forth by citizens.

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**We believe that politicians of all parties should consider using some of our techniques to greatly increase their grassroots consultations in developing ideas, policies and programs, or in solving problems which affect citizens directly, even if this means spending less time in parliament and more with their constituents.**

Citizen input may also be essential before policies are implemented. Nothing in this is contrary to our parliamentary tradition; rather it enhances and safeguards the essence of that tradition. The challenge to government is to create a continuing climate for true dialogue. The means are at hand; it would be a pity — indeed, unwise — not to use them.

## **6. Conclusion**

Our work with the Forum has been a stirring and mind-stretching experience for us all. What we heard from the peoples of Canada at times shocked us, sometimes saddened us, always interested us, very often moved us. In many ways, it also changed us. We come out of this phase — for it is no more — of Canada's national renewal with a clear message to those who put us here.

We have tried as best we could to collect and focus what the people told us. If we have misunderstood and thus made errors or omissions, these are honest, and on them the people will judge us.

We won't conclude with our own words, but with one last thought from a citizen. This sums up a warning about the fate of this report which thousands asked us to convey to the government and to all politicians:

*No hyperbole or political hedge can screen any member of any legislature who thwarts the will of the people on this matter. The voters are watching and waiting.*

**June 27, 1991**

# Commissioners' Comments

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## *Comment by Richard Cashin*

The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future was set up to engage Canadians in a discussion of the vital issues affecting the country's future development as a political community.

From the outset there were those who expressed the hope that this process would do more than just solicit the views of Canadians. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, we were unable, as some commissioners would have liked, to "deepen the dialogue."

I have three basic concerns, the first of which is the limitation of this process. Public opinion must be respected for its complexity, and we must recognize that people's views on subjects change with the information they have and the thoroughness of the debate.

The people who spoke to us expressed opinion on many matters. We have no way of knowing how their opinions on one matter were related to their opinions on other matters, or what priority particular issues may have had in their thinking. Nor do we have any way of knowing how representative the opinions we hear may be of the opinions of all Canadians. This is because the process of participation was self-selective.

My second concern has to do with the continuing emphasis which was given to American-style concepts of direct democracy.

These are not new ideas — they have been around since the time of the Progressive movement in the United States and Canada. Some of these notions were adopted in the United States but they were rejected in Canada. They were rejected because they do not fit well with our parliamentary system.

Consider, for example, the effect on our system of responsible government if a small but well-organized single issue group were able to use the recall to force by-elections in several ridings at the same time. Or, think what mischief a small group could do if it had the power to initiate a referendum on bilingualism or on equalization payments. Moreover, as the American experience shows, the referendum is a process that favours the wealthy and single issue groups.

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Many of the proposed suggestions which reflected this agenda have been altered. But my concern remains. It is that we not allow the exercise through which we have gone to be used to legitimize notions of governance so at variance with the principles of British parliamentary democracy.

My third basic concern relates to the fact that, because of the multiplicity of issues that were raised and because of the breadth of our mandate, we might lose sight of the importance of focusing on the central issue, which is national unity.

I say this because, in the light of what we heard, it is by no means certain that Canada will stay together. If it does stay together, it could be a country that is dramatically, irrevocably and substantially altered.

The basic question is how does the rest of Canada accommodate Quebec and how does Quebec reconcile itself with the rest of Canada. How can this be done? From what we have heard, there are two ways to do it: either Quebec is recognized as a distinct society with certain arrangements (constitutional or otherwise) that are different, or federal power is devolved to all provinces.

Thus there is a real dilemma for those who believe in the need for a strong federal government and who, for this reason, are reluctant to recognize Quebec as a distinct society with different arrangements (constitutional or otherwise).

Some people advocate the devolution of power for reasons other than the constitutional agenda. Devolution, to them, is part of a whole different approach to governance, one that is rooted in a philosophy that puts emphasis on market forces.

This approach has important implications in respect to the fundamental principles upon which the Canadian political community was built. One of the distinctive characteristics of Canada has been the federal government's role in equalizing opportunities among regions and individuals. A general devolution of power to the provinces would clearly weaken the federal government's ability to perform this role.

Notwithstanding the conflicting views which we heard, it is my opinion that there would be a large

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number of people, particularly in Atlantic Canada, who would accept a different relationship with Quebec which would recognize it as a distinct society with different constitutional arrangements rather than put at risk those principles of governance which ensure equal opportunities for all Canadians.

We heard about many different issues and many different views about those issues, but before we can deal with them we have first to establish what the political community is — is it to be a political community with Quebec or without Quebec?

The resolution of that question will shape the kind of society we will be in the future. Its resolution will determine the respect we give to diversity, to minority rights, to collective rights and to differing regional interests.

The principles which we are discussing go to the very heart of what distinguishes Canada from the United States. It is therefore more than just a question of how Quebec is accommodated. It is also a question of how we deal with aboriginal issues. It is a question of how we deal with the ethnic pluralism of our society, and it is a question of how we deal with the economically disadvantaged citizens and regions. Explicit in this approach is a recognition of the concept that our society values collective rights.

We are not dealing here with choices among policies for the short term. We are dealing with the underlying values of our political community.

From what we heard through the Forum and from what national and provincial leaders are saying, there is a great preoccupation with process and personalities. I believe there is a danger that this preoccupation will divert our energies from dealing with the fundamental issue of whether or not there is a reconciliation with Quebec and whether or not that reconciliation will allow our nation to build for the future on the principles of our past.

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## *Comment by Robert Normand*

I cannot subscribe to the content of the Forum's report without expressing the following reservations.

Firstly, let me say that I find deplorable the fact that the Forum was unable to get Canadians to express their thoughts regarding the future of the country in a broader perspective and that it basically limited itself to gathering only the superficial views of those Canadians who addressed it, in a fashion similar to that of open-line radio shows. In this context, citizens had a tendency to limit themselves to stating first impressions, often based upon erroneous information that was not corrected, and adopted radical positions without first evaluating their possible consequences. The information thus gathered is not devoid of interest, but it will have to be put into perspective in all cases where it is to be used as the basis for developing political solutions.

Several commissioners however, myself included, had asked, as early as January 1991, that the dialogue be "deepened," but the desire to put on a show for the media took precedence over the substance. Further, no commissioners' meeting was held between March 3 and May 7, in other words during a two month period (out of an eight-month mandate), despite my requests. This deliberate hiatus did nothing to improve matters!

I also deplore that the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada, in the context of an in-depth political restructuring, was trivialized, especially during the first few months. I would further like to underline that in most cases, the majority of participants at the Forum's group discussions I attended, tired after more than an hour's discussion on their own concerns and on native issues, were no longer up to speaking out as dispassionately on their vision of Quebec and were often tempted to apply to Quebec the outlines of solutions they had just previously sketched for native issues.

The positive suggestions made by citizens (Part II of the report) and by the commissioners (Part III) are either too convoluted in form or too timid in content to be adequate for resolving the problems at hand; on the contrary, they might well contribute to maintaining the divisions that now exist in the country, as they bring

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out the lack of urgency English Canada attaches to the need to accommodate Quebec rapidly and responsibly. In this regard, the Forum's contribution is far from meeting my expectations.

It is also unfortunate that the Forum did not devote more attention to the situation of the some 800,000 francophones living outside Quebec. Only a few observations in Part II are devoted to them. Furthermore, while the need for some form of bilingualism in Canada is underlined, what is being requested is a revision of the federal policy in this area, which revision could probably serve to water it down. Views were expressed against Quebec's Bill 178 that is considered as limiting the rights of anglophones, without at the same time paying enough attention to language laws applicable to francophones living outside Quebec. Here again, the report underlines the "political lyricism" of Canadians regarding the some 500,000 natives whose situation troubles them, and rightly so, but fails to deal with the appalling rate of assimilation of some francophone communities outside Quebec.

Though I found the Forum experience worthwhile in certain aspects, it was an unpleasant exercise for me in others.

I have never accepted, and I still bitterly resent, that a "preliminary report" was released in March, without the text drafted by Forum staff having first been approved by commissioners and without even having given commissioners advance notice of its publication. Indeed several of us learned of it in the newspaper! I can understand that, further to my remarks and pressured by members of parliament, those in charge of the Forum wanted to latch on to any available lifesaver in the hopes of not sinking in the quagmire, but I find it inadmissible that the process resorted to resembles manipulation tactics aimed both at the commission and parliament.

I also find that the cost of the Forum was much too high, given the quality of the final product. Its hefty price tag is for the most part due to the administrative shambles surrounding the first few months of its work, that was based upon unclear orientations that had not

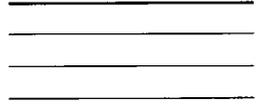
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been properly evaluated as to their cost and that were often contradictory.

If I decided to stay on as a member of the Forum and to sign the final report, it is because this exercise did, nevertheless, enable us to feel the pulse of Canada, despite its obvious diagnostic failings and its too weak remedies, given the sickly state of the country. In my view, Part I gives a rather honest but slightly pompous description of what the Forum accomplished, while Part II is a quite faithful reflection of the perceptions gathered by or through the commissioners, and Part III, though it doesn't go far enough, does no harm. I did not want to add my signature without bringing these few reservations to your attention.

A minister has been appointed to deal specifically with constitutional issues. Given the bitter confusion concerning the country's constitutional future, as brought to light in the report, and the Forum's inability to put forward satisfactory solutions, let me say: "Good luck to you, Mr. Clark."

# Appendix A



## The mandate

# Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future

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## The Mandate

The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future will involve a dialogue and discussion with and among Canadians. Canadians will have an opportunity to discuss the values and characteristics fundamental to the well-being of Canada.

### *Specific objectives include:*

- (a) ensuring that the views of Canadians from all regions, from all linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and from all walks of life are obtained on:
  - what Canadians value most about their country, province and community;
  - what characteristics they consider to be fundamentally Canadian;
  - what they perceive as being the major challenges Canada faces over the coming decade;
  - what actions should be taken, by citizens and by governments, in the face of these challenges:
    - to strengthen the fundamental characteristics of Canada, and to renew and reinforce the values Canadians share;
    - to protect the interests of Canadian society; and ensure that governments have the capacity to meet the challenges, and reflect the needs and aspirations of Canadian society;
  - what policies, programs and attitudes might make it easier for Canadians to feel free, equal and respected as fellow citizens;
  - what approaches might strengthen the sense of uniqueness, participation, freedom and solidarity of Canada's regions, cultures and peoples;
- (b) ensuring that groups of Canadians from different regions and different walks of life meet and discuss both shared Canadian characteristics and interests, and the identity and concerns of specific regions and groups including:
  - the nature of the relationship among Canada's aboriginal and non-aboriginal citizens and institutions which will maintain and strengthen the

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- identity and heritage of Canada's aboriginal citizens in the context of a modern democracy;
  - Canada's official languages, and the nature of the accommodations required in its institutions and among its citizens to respect the linguistic preferences of both linguistic majorities and minorities in Canadian society;
  - how the characteristics of Canada's regions affect its identity and unity;
  - how ethnic and cultural diversity affect Canadian identity and values;
  - in a context of increasing global interdependency and international competition, what areas of government require action on behalf of Canadian society as a whole, and what areas are better addressed locally;
  - the characteristics of the collective rights which are accorded to certain groups of Canadians; the role of such rights in defining Canada's identity; and the nature of an appropriate balance between Canadians' rights as regional, linguistic, indigenous or ethnic collectivities and as individual citizens;
- (c) ensuring that meetings are held among Canadians in each province and territory of Canada and among Canadians from different regions and backgrounds;
- (d) ensuring that there is participation by a broad spectrum of Canadians of all ages, origins, regions, and walks of life by:
- arranging for groups of Canadians from different regions and/or from different linguistic, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds to meet with each other for discussions of issues including but not limited to those set out in paragraphs (a) and (b);
  - establishing discussions through regional forums of citizens and/or opinion leaders by linkages of all types to allow them to compare and discuss regional perspectives on identified areas of interest;
  - convening of formal public debates on identified themes, which may be broadcast, or distributed
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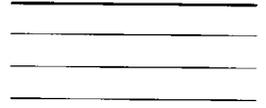
by any appropriate electronic means, to maximize public information and feedback;

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- soliciting of written briefs relevant to specific aspects of the public dialogue;

(e) ensuring that the results and report of the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future are available to all Canadians.

# Appendix B



## Methodology and key issues

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## Methodology and Key Issues

Because of the importance and complexity of the input the Citizens' Forum received from Canadians, we had to design a special system of analysis that would allow us to answer questions and reach findings and observations. Computers were essential to this, because of the very large numbers of people and documents involved. But even more essential were the dedicated and committed professional analysts who read every document citizens submitted.

The Forum began receiving letters and briefs almost from the day it was announced. From these early contributions we began developing a list of key words to help us keep track of what issues and concerns and ideas were being offered by whom, and from what part of Canada. This list ultimately had over 2,000 key words, as the process was continuously adapted to capture new ideas and issues raised by Forum participants.

For discussion groups, the Forum provided a kit of materials, including a standardized response form with open-ended questions for a reporter or moderator to answer about the group's comments. Receiving information in this relatively standardized fashion meant that trends could be readily established from a statistically valid sample of 35 per cent of group response forms. This sample was properly weighted to reflect the provincial distribution of population, using standard statistical methods. Following the very detailed analysis of this sample, all the other group response forms were read by the analysts and checked against the identified trends to confirm common points of view or highlight differences or new trends emerging. Response forms sent in by individuals were analyzed in the same way. Every comment was read, and over 2,000 of the most apt and/or quotable comments were entered into a databank keyed to the major themes identified in this report.

The content and complexity of letters and briefs varied widely. Since there were considerably fewer of them than of group response forms, they were all analyzed and coded in detail. Calls on the toll-free Idea Lines were initially analyzed against a check-list of is-

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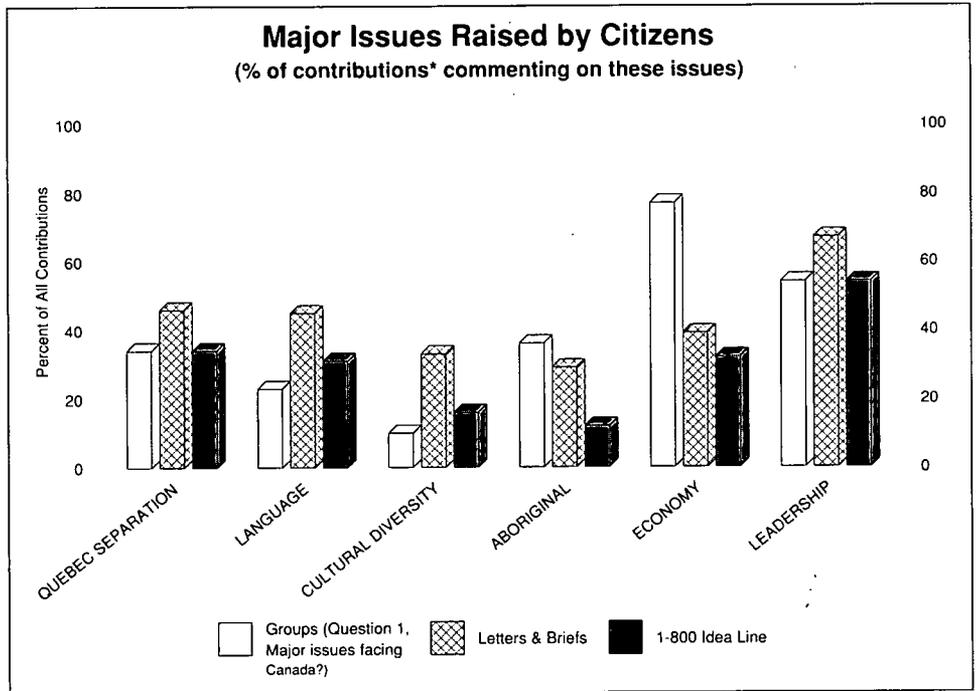
sues raised by callers, and later analyzed in more detail by means of computerized keyword searches. They also served to cross-check trends of opinion.

The results of this analysis process are presented in Part II of this report — What We Heard. In this appendix, we present a number of graphs which highlight quantitatively some of the major points that emerged from the analysis.

## MAJOR ISSUES

Figure 1 shows the percentage of contributors who indicated that issues discussed in Section II of this report were among the major issues facing Canada.

Figure 1



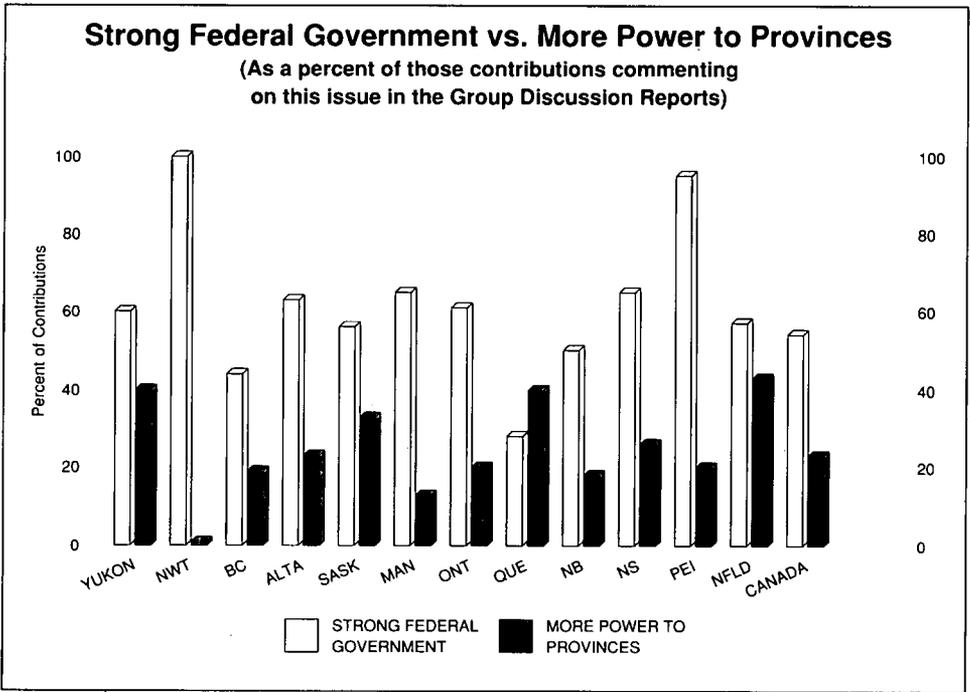
\*Note: Total contributions in each category:

Group Discussion Reports.....	7,211
Letters & Briefs.....	7,056
1-800 Idea Line Calls.....	75,069

# POWERS OF FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Figure 2 shows the percentage of group discussion reports which recommended that the powers of the federal government be maintained or strengthened, compared with the percentage which recommended that provincial (or, in some cases, territorial) governments should have more powers.

Figure 2

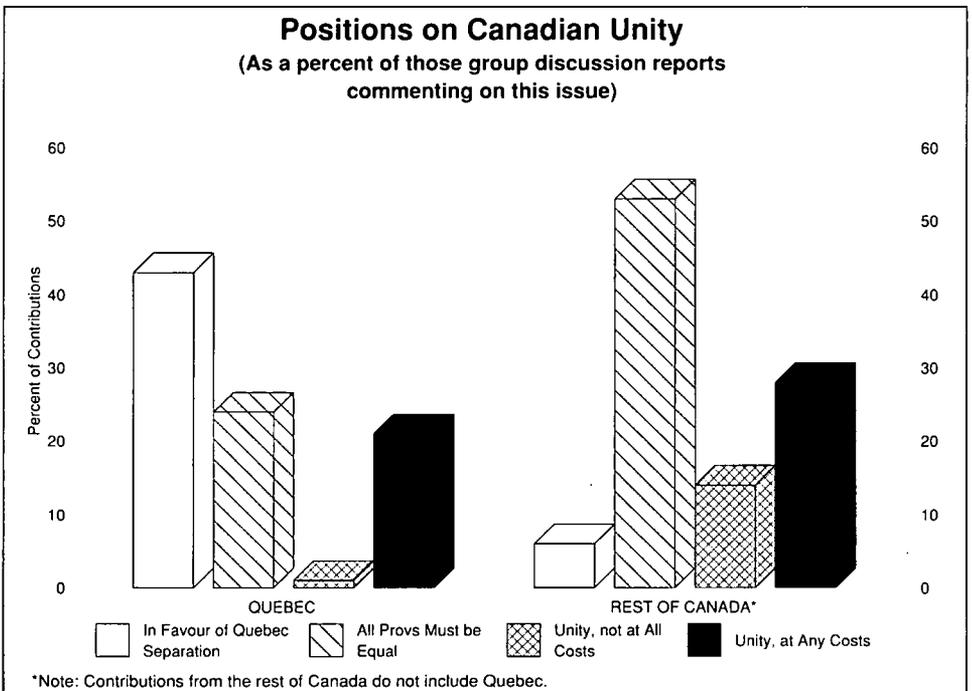


Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because group discussion reports may have contained both types of comment.

# QUEBEC AND CANADIAN UNITY

Figure 3 shows the positions expressed in group discussion reports on Quebec and Canadian unity, as a percentage of all group discussion reports which commented on this issue.

**Figure 3**

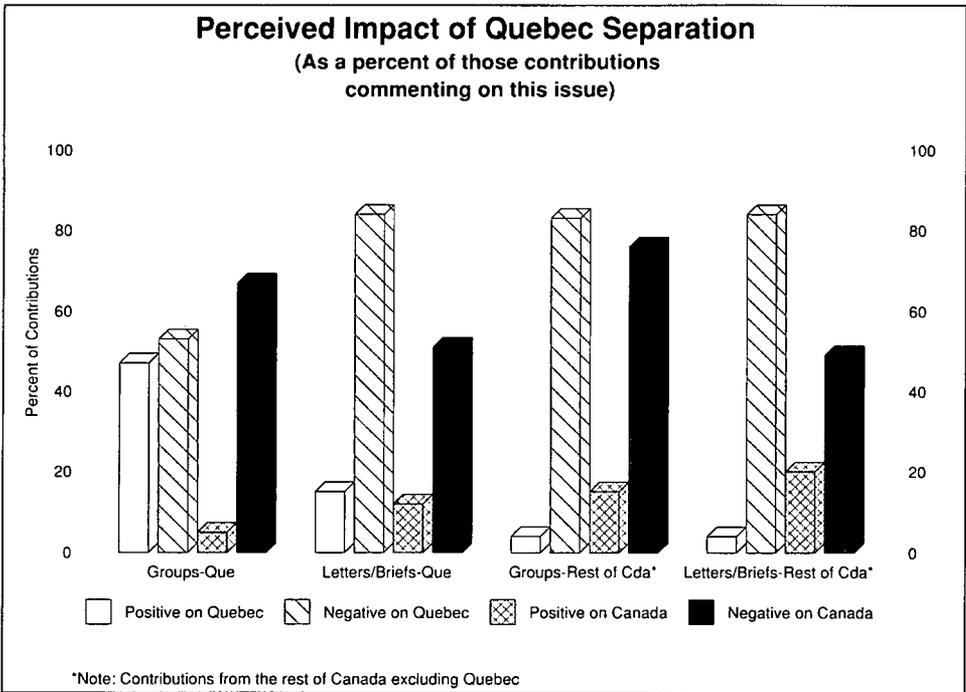


*Note:* Percentages do not add to 100 because group discussion reports may have contained more than one type of comment.

## QUEBEC AND CANADIAN UNITY (CONT'D)

Figure 4 shows the views expressed, in group discussion reports and letters and briefs, on the impact Quebec separation would have on Quebec and on Canada as a whole. The graph shows positions expressed in documents received from Quebec compared with documents from the other provinces and territories. All commenters perceived some impact.

Figure 4

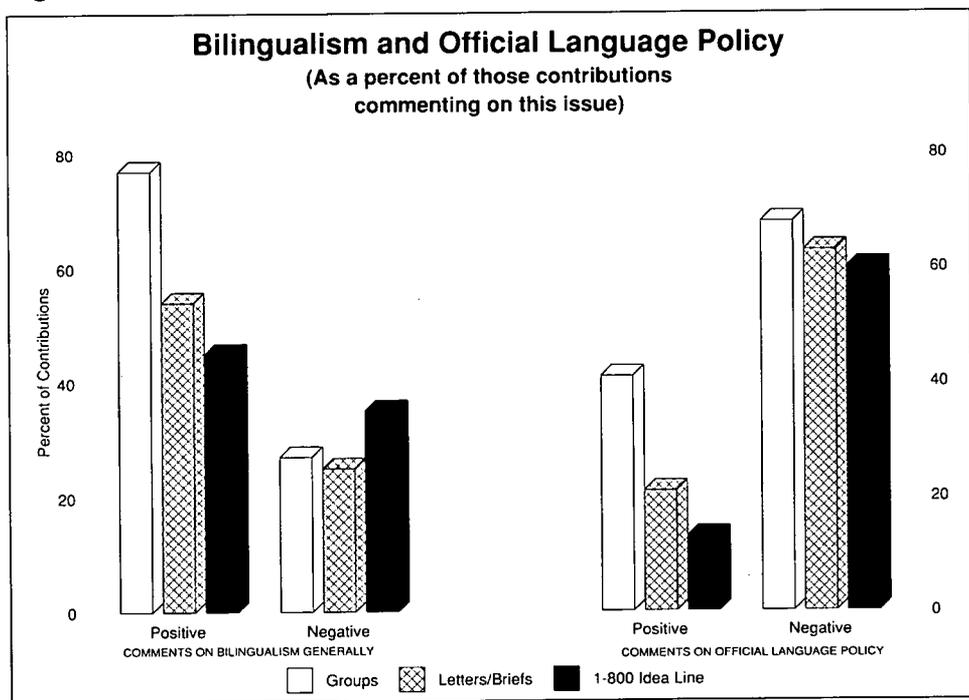


*Note:* Percentages do not add to 100 because contributions may have contained more than one type of comment, e.g. that Quebec separation may have both positive and negative effects.

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Figure 5 shows views expressed, through group discussion reports, letters and briefs, and the 1-800 Idea Line on bilingualism generally and on Canada's official language policy.

Figure 5

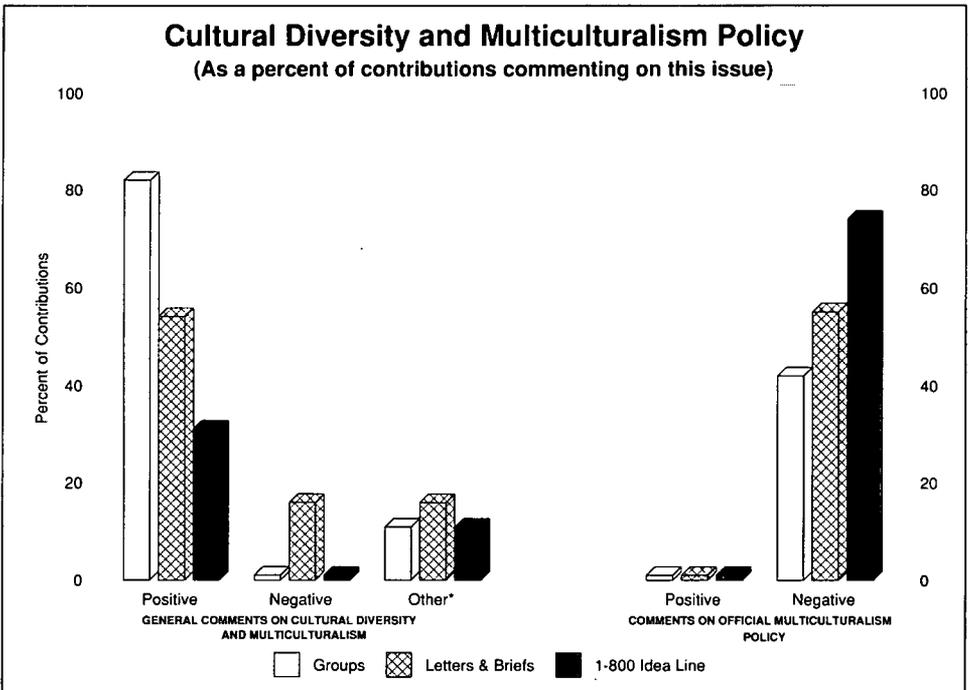


Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because contributions may have contained more than one type of comment.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURALISM

Figure 6 shows views expressed, through group discussion reports, letters and briefs, and the 1-800 Idea Line, on cultural diversity in Canadian society and on Canada's official multiculturalism policy.

**Figure 6**



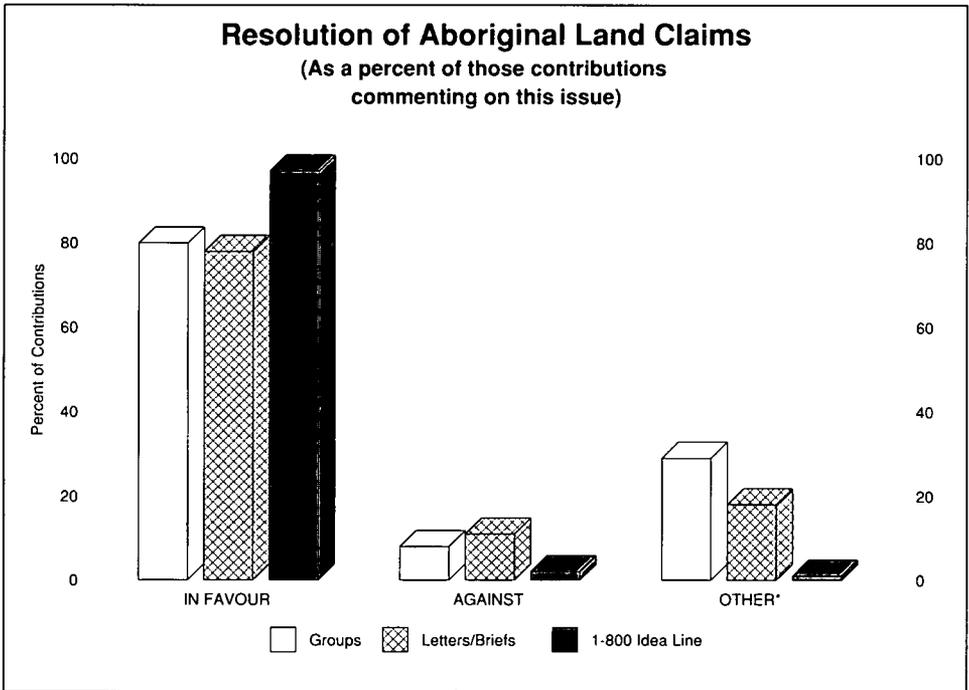
*Note:* Percentages do not add to 100 because contributions may have contained more than one type of comment.

*\*Other:* Includes comments such as "Must save Canadian traditions"; "Canadians are different/similar by colour and/or race"

## ABORIGINAL ISSUES

Of the group discussion reports, letters and briefs, and 1-800 Idea Line calls which expressed views on aboriginal land claims, figure 7 shows the percentage which favoured or opposed their resolution.

Figure 7



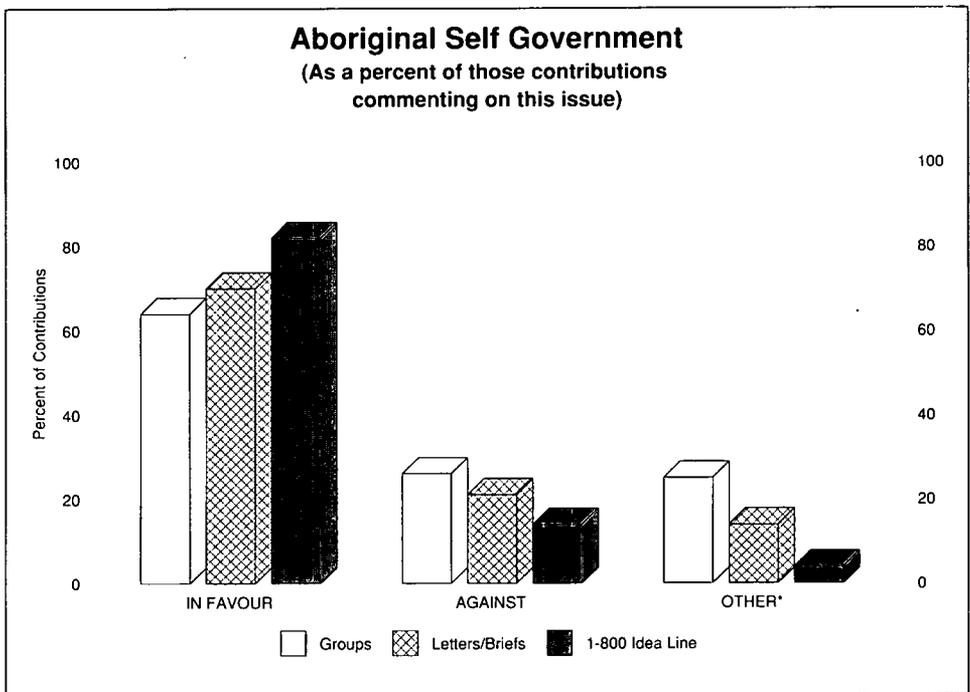
*Note:* Percentages do not add to 100 because contributions may have contained more than one type of comment.

**\*Other:** Includes comments which identify aboriginal land claims as an issue without taking a position on their resolution

## ABORIGINAL ISSUES (CONT'D)

Of the group discussion reports, letters and briefs, and 1-800 Idea Line calls which expressed views on aboriginal self-government, figure 8 shows the percentage which favoured or opposed the concept.

Figure 8



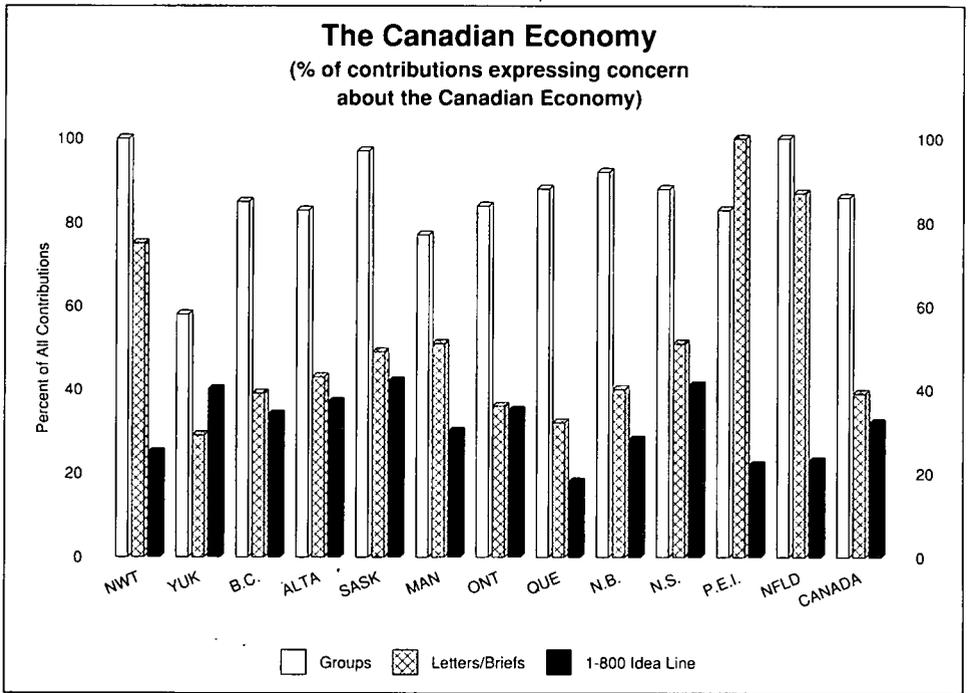
*Note:* Percentages do not add to 100 because contributions may have contained more than one type of comment.

\***Other:** Includes comments which identify aboriginal self-government as an issue without taking a position on the concept.

# THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

Figure 9 shows a breakdown, by province, of group discussion reports, letters and briefs, and 1-800 Idea Line calls which identified the economy as an issue of concern.

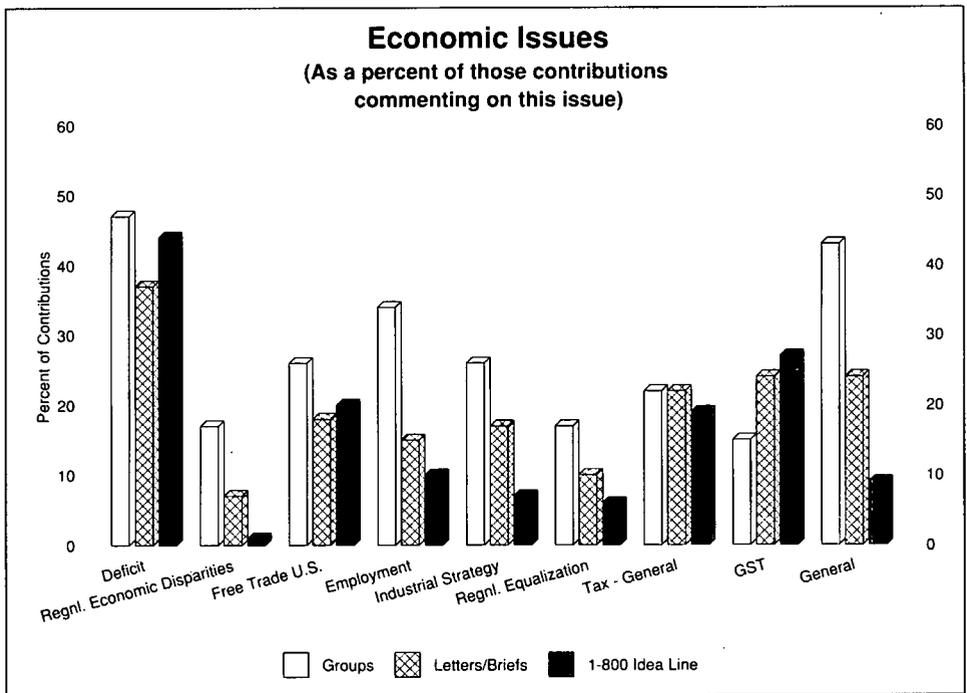
**Figure 9**



## THE CANADIAN ECONOMY (CONT'D)

Of group discussion reports, letters and briefs, and 1-800 Idea Line calls which expressed concerns about the Canadian economy, figure 10 shows the percentage of each type of contribution which identified the issues listed along the bottom of the chart as areas of specific concern.

**Figure 10**

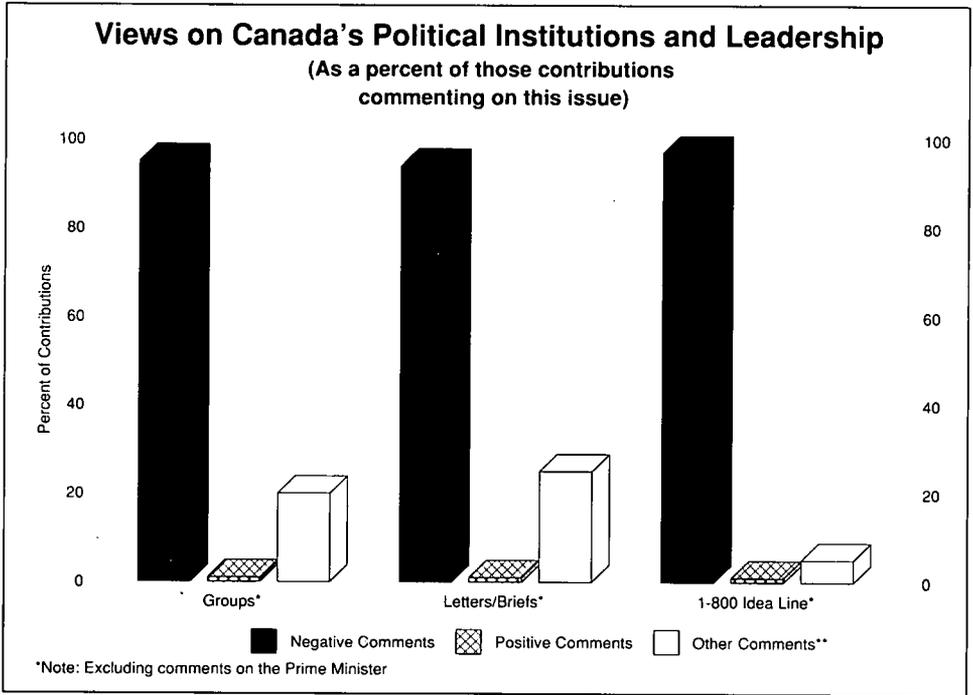


*Note:* Percentages do not add to 100 because contributions may have contained more than one type of comment.

# RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP

Figure 11 shows views expressed on Canada's political institutions and leadership, through group discussion reports, letters and briefs, and calls to the 1-800 Idea Line.

**Figure 11**



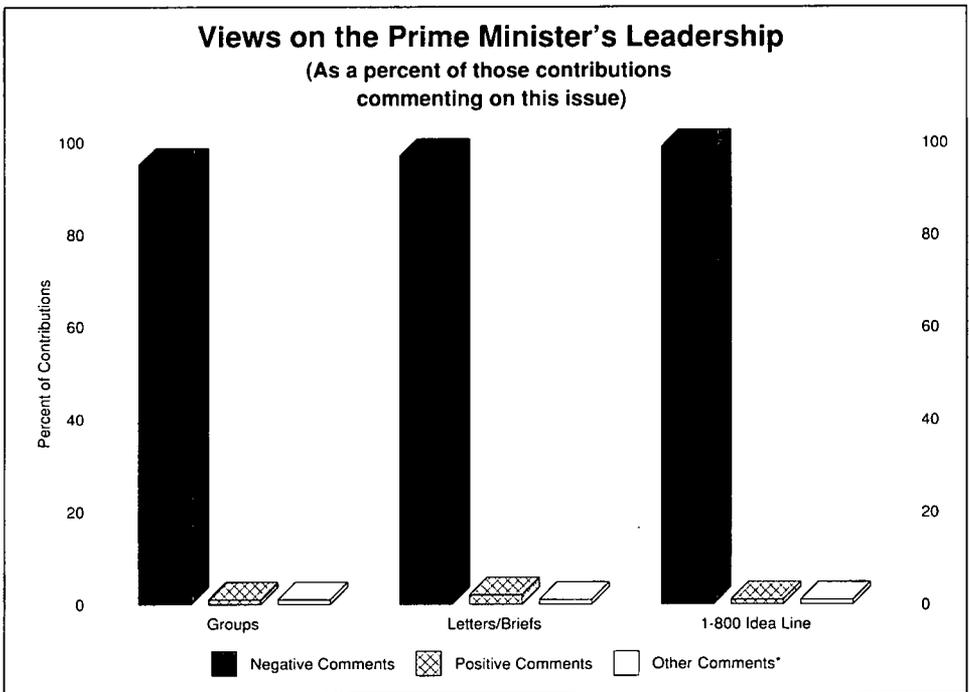
*Note:* Percentages do not add to 100 because contributions may have contained more than one type of comment.

**\*\*Other:** Includes neutral comments which identified leadership as an issue, or which recommended changes that should be made in the constitutional reform process.

## RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP (CONT'D)

Figure 12 shows the views expressed on the prime minister's leadership through group discussion reports, letters and briefs and calls to the 1-800 Idea Line.

Figure 12



*Note:* Percentages do not add to 100 because contributions may have contained more than one type of comment.

\***Other:** Includes neutral comments which identified the prime minister's leadership as an issue.