

# To Clarify A Vision

*The aim: a nation where all people feel at home and fairly treated*



*The Maclean's forum of 12 representative Canadians, meeting with three conflict resolution specialists, produced the outlines of a vision for a new Canada during an intensive, three-day retreat at an Ontario resort. They did not intend the document to be a definitive statement on the shape of a future Canada, but a realistic basis for further discussion and refinement. Just as important as the substantive suggestions is the fact that they were arrived at using a process under which people with dramatically different points of view could reach agreement fairly quickly, and without acrimony, on a wide range of issues. The process that led to the writing of the draft could be extended to address other issues.*

**The Briars, June 9, 1991**

## INTRODUCTION

As individual Canadians with a wide range of interests and points of view, we have some joint suggestions:

1. Rather than trying to make binding decisions now on the precise shape of Canada's future, we work together to clarify the vision of a Canada in which all Canadians would feel fully accepted, at home and fairly treated, and with an appropriate balance between national concerns and local autonomy.
2. There is no guarantee that Canadians can both create such a vision and convert it into reality, but we should certainly try. And before making any decision to abandon the goal of a Canada for all Canadians, we should look with equal care at what would be a realistic vision of a sovereign Canada, a sovereign Quebec and self-government for the First Nations.
3. A vision of Canadians working together is not simply a matter of constitutional language. We suggest that Canadians devote substantial effort to the human dimension—to understanding one another empathetically, to caring and sharing their concerns and ideas. And that they also work together to make the Canadian economy as prosperous and promising for the future as they can. On a base of human understanding and economic co-operation, constitutional questions will be far easier to resolve. We suggest that all three activities be pursued concurrently.

## PART A: MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

In recent years, as a consequence of economic and political circumstances, many Canadians have become increasingly concerned with their own immediate interests, and those of their neighbors, their immediate community and their province—and are more likely to ignore the interests of minorities, of other groups and of other provinces. There is often a lack of understanding, a lack of caring, a lack of empathy and less willingness to share.

In contrast with most of the world, Canada has a record of which all Canadians can be proud. Yet many serious problems exist. Social, economic and constitutional questions have a better chance of being well handled if Canadians work more closely together, side by side, with greater understanding, empathy, tolerance, genuine concern and a willingness to share.

In many areas, much is being done. We suggest that Canadians consider further steps along the following lines to provide stronger human ties on which economic and constitutional measures can be based.

### 1. Individual Canadians

- Travel more frequently and widely within Canada (there are places in Canada as marvellous as those elsewhere).
- Promote cultural education about Canada's first peoples.
- Encourage children to learn about all other Canadians—their culture, language, history and way of life.
- Be a role model by being open and respectful of all Canadians.
- Check social studies, history and other courses being taught in their children's schools for fairness.
- Encourage the schools to participate in student exchanges within Canada.
- When travelling, establish personal contact with others through professional, business or other connections.

### 2. Schoolteachers and school leaders

- Organize exchange programs within Canada.
- Twin more schools with schools in other regions.
- Compare curricula with teachers from other schools in Canada for fairness, balance, etc.
- Invite guest speakers with different points of view and from different parts of Canada.
- Explore videotape and other options for familiarizing students with other parts of Canada.
- Travel with their students as class projects within Canada, including vacation travel.
- Use sport travel to become more familiar with all of Canada.

### 3. Nongovernmental organizations and entities

- Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, etc.: promote inexpensive package trips within Canada.
- Promote awareness and use of youth hostels within Canada and the availability of college residences for summer travel.
- Business corporations: consider more business travel and meetings as opportunities to meet and work together with other Canadians on matters of common interest.

### 4. Provincial governments

- Co-operate in promoting travel opportunities.
- Departments of education to work with those in other provinces on curricular changes to promote closer "all-Canada" understanding.

- Arrange, as a national project, for the writing of a good history of all Canadians for all Canadians.

## 5. Federal government

- Appoint a commission to replicate successes. Its task would be to find programs or projects in one province (day care, recycling, halfway houses, etc.) that are successful, and promote their replication in other areas.
- Organize joint problem-solving groups. On any particular problem, get people from different parts of Canada to work together on it.
- Reduce suspicion by having an agency regularly produce popular and easily understood information, explaining, for example, where all federal tax revenues came from and on what they were spent.

## 6. Media

- Persuade a magazine to establish a "replicating success" feature each week which looks for successes in one community that might be replicated in others.
- Encourage bilingual publication of magazine and other articles.

# PART B: THE ECONOMY

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

### A co-ordinated, cohesive national industrial policy. Goals:

- Improve industry.
- Increase competitiveness in global markets.
- Create jobs.
- Assist the disadvantaged.
- Improve co-operation among all Canadians.

The policy will be modelled to some extent after the one in Japan, and may include a ministry of international trade and industry.

### The likely results of the plan are:

- An expanded economic pie for all Canadians to share.
- Reduced provincial fighting over a shrinking pie.
- Reduced business risk and uncertainty about the future.
- More economic opportunities, especially for minorities, francophones and indigenous populations.
- Reduction of tension and worry.
- Increased work ethic.
- Improvement in the quality of life for all.
- Increased cohesion and co-operation in many areas.
- Increased confidence of all citizens in Canada and its ability to meet the needs of all.

### Major elements of the plan would include:

- Identifying Canada's strategic economic strengths internationally—industries, skills, etc.
- Training and retraining the population to meet those strategic goals, including strengthening education.
- Providing investment and training incentives—taxes, loans, venture capital funds and so forth.
- Expanding research, and developing and targeting it to strategic industries.
- Encouraging economic co-operation among regions, provinces, companies and industries through structural means, such as joint boards.
- Providing a disciplined fiscal policy.
- Making marketing and distribution more efficient.
- Informing and consulting with the citizenry regularly.
- Ensuring that all peoples in Canada receive an equitable share of development in which they participate through ownership of natural or other resources, contribution of their labor or ideas or skills, or other effort.

## SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

### 1. Devise a National Plan

#### Initiated by:

- The office of the prime minister.

#### Co-ordinated by a national committee with representatives from such entities as:

- Federal ministries of industry, trade and technology.
- The Canadian Manufacturers' Association.
- Canadian Federation of Independent Business.
- Presidents of some major companies/employers.
- National Research Council Canada.
- Consultants with international perspective and knowledge of models elsewhere.

#### Representation:

- The above organization would choose expert staffs and panels with membership from all provinces.

#### Consultation:

- All significant groups in Canada to be formally consulted.
- Hearings to be held.

#### Timetable:

- First draft report due six months after convening.

#### Work:

- To identify Canadian competitive strengths and propose methods, including programs outlined in this draft, to take advantage of them.
- Possibly to exist on a permanent basis to co-ordinate new ideas and spot trends.
- Study models elsewhere, including in Japan and Germany, that could be used in Canada.

### 2. Identify Strategic Strengths

#### Co-ordinated by:

- Major Canadian business schools.
- International marketing experts.
- A full-time director hired by the national committee.

#### Work:

- Identify those industries, skills and activities in which Canada has or could readily develop an international competitive advantage.
- Suggest the resources and skills needed to turn that advantage into money.
- Use respective provincial skills so that provinces can assist one another to strengthen their individual and collective ability to develop international markets. This can be done through production, pricing, supply and marketing decisions and strategies.

### 3. Train and Retrain; Provide Job Development

#### Co-ordinated by:

- Industry associations in targeted industries.
- Universities, trade schools, institutes of technology.
- Government departments of education—federal and provincial.

#### Work:

- Provide opportunities for students as early as high school to learn skills in strategic industries.
- Provide new university and college courses as necessary.
- Provide on-the-job training in key industries.
- Institute special entrepreneurial training courses in schools. Canadian Federation of Independent Business to take the lead, along with ministries of education in each province. Identify existing programs and co-ordinate

them. Replicate successes in programs and businesses.

- Upgrade provincial education and teaching in the skills needed.
- Establish day care centres in communities and companies to enable more women to work.
- Provide for job sharing as appropriate.
- Provide alcohol, drug and other rehabilitation programs to improve the quality of work life.

#### 4. Provide Financial and Business Incentives

##### Co-ordinated by:

- Government and provincial finance ministries.
- Chartered banks, trust companies and other financial institutions.
- Individual companies/industries.
- Legislative committees in finance.
- Federal Business Development Bank.

##### Work:

- Provide tax credits/deductions to individuals and companies for tuition for training in strategic industries.
- Make guaranteed loans, where appropriate.
- Pass laws enabling pension funds and insurance companies to provide loans, start-up capital, bridge capital and other financing to new ventures.
- Co-ordinate venture-capital companies.
- Establish a special program of financial incentives for disadvantaged persons, minorities, First Nations and others.
- Establish special program of financial incentives for research and development in strategic industries.

#### 5. Expand and Target Strategic Research and Development

##### Co-ordinated by:

- National Research Council Canada.
- Provincial councils.
- National laboratories.
- Appropriate legislative committees.

##### Work:

- Co-ordinate work in producing innovation in strategic industries.
- Serve as central clearinghouse for information on new research and development.
- Curtail duplication and inefficiency in research.

#### 6. Improve Provincial and Local Economic Co-operation, Synergy

##### Co-ordinated by:

- Individual provincial premiers and staff.
- Federal and provincial regulatory agencies.
- Industries involved.
- Local community and business leaders.

##### Work:

- Manage key resources more effectively.
- Identify common interests in particular fields and divide the resource development, production, distribution and marketing to take maximum advantage of provincial strengths.
- Eliminate duplication.
- Reduce trade barriers among provinces and co-ordinate trade and marketing policies with foreign sources and markets.
- Use successful models where appropriate.
- Consult the industries that would benefit most from such co-operation, including transport.
- Decentralize federal regulation in fisheries, agriculture and other industries included in this area, to promote greater efficiency and co-operation.

- Develop regional economic boards to co-ordinate economic interests and development in all regions of Canada.
- Develop synergistic economic strategies and projects among Quebec and other provinces, and among aboriginal peoples and government, industry and others at all levels.
- Promote the involvement of local business and civic leaders in carrying out national industrial growth while meeting local needs. This should include designing, planning, financing and advising on the development of local industries. Local leaders and any associations they may create would assist in finding jobs for the unemployed, promote small-business opportunities and, because of that, improve the quality of life for people from diverse cultural, economic and physical backgrounds. The local development is intended to have a positive effect on the social aspects of communities through economic improvements.

#### 7. Mandate Responsible Budgets, Federal and Provincial

##### Co-ordinated by:

- Federal and provincial ministries of finance.
- Legislative finance committees.

##### Work:

- Develop further studies to determine the best way to budget responsibly and manage overall debt, using models from elsewhere.
- Increase budget responsibility partly through greater efficiency in government operations.
- Conduct audits by outside, independent entities to eliminate and expose poor business practices and waste. Widely publicize the results.

##### Rationale:

- Would reduce inflation.
- Would eventually free money for social programs—money that would otherwise go to pay interest on government debt.

#### 8. Inform Canadians of All Progress; Involve Citizens

##### Co-ordinated by:

- Public relations staff of national committee.
- Individual industries.
- Provinces, federal government.

##### Work:

- News conferences, media interviews, reports and other matters on a regular and ongoing basis.
- Institute mechanisms to receive regular feedback from Canadian citizens and businesses.
- Appoint public members to regional economic boards and other bodies.
- Widely publish regular evaluations of the strategic programs.

## PART C: THE CONSTITUTION

### The Problem

The current system does not afford some peoples, regions, provinces and communities within Canada the tools needed to adequately promote their economic, political and social interests. There is inadequate avenue for some people to participate in decisions that affect them. Moreover, Canada should be able to do more to care for, and improve the lives of, its people.

#### 1. Representative Reform

##### A possible cause:

One cause of this problem is that the current system tends to distance elected officials from their constituents' views, needs and

concerns. The government, as currently structured, is not sufficiently representative.

**A possible strategy:**

One approach to dealing with this problem is to reform the system to make it more representative, to allow for greater and fairer participation and representation of all the Canadian people.

**Some specific reforms might include:**

- A. In the House of Commons and Senate of Canada, there shall be:
  - Free voting—members would not be required by law practice or precedent to vote along party lines (in an effort to encourage members to cast a vote based on the needs of their constituents).
  - Guaranteed representation for the First Nations of Canada.
  - Fixed terms for members, which would eliminate the concept of the government resigning if its programs are defeated.
  - Shorter terms for members of the House of Commons than for senators (in an effort to encourage members with shorter terms to be more responsive to their constituents).
- B. The Senate of Canada shall be amended so that:
  - Members are to be directly elected.
  - The number of members is to be determined by further discussion.
  - Members should be apportioned on a political or geographic basis, or some combination of the two, according to an arrangement to be determined in further discussions.
  - A specific number of seats will be reserved for representatives of the First Nations.
  - The role of the Senate shall be limited to approving, amending or rejecting legislation.
- C. The Bank of Canada shall be reformed so that each region shall be better represented on its board. The board's chairman would be appointed by the prime minister.
- D. Representatives from the national political bodies of the First Nations shall be included in federal forums discussing issues or dealing with policy affecting the First Nations (e.g. constitutional reform).
- E. Electoral reform:
  - Regular elections at fixed dates.
  - Staggered elections (e.g. a portion of senators and members of the House of Commons elected every two years), in an effort to provide short-term turnover in at least a significant portion of the Parliament and hence greater responsiveness to constituents.
  - The amount of campaign contributions from individuals, corporations and interest groups shall be further limited.
  - National political parties' spending shall be further limited.

- Recommendations should be explored by a member of the judiciary on the possibility and desirability of moving to a system of proportional representation.

**2. Setting National Standards for Social Programs to Meet Basic Needs and Entitlements**

**A possible cause:**

Another possible cause of the current situation is that there is disagreement about the apportionment of control over social programs among the federal government, the provinces, First Nations and the territories. It is difficult to balance the interests in having national standards and local flexibility.

**A possible approach:**

One way of approaching this problem is to allow Canadians to have more of a say in how those standards are set in the first place.

**Some reforms might include:**

- A. A more representative government, as described in Section 1, to decide on national standards.
- B. Wider consultation with people across Canada, especially those affected by a standard, including:
  - The commission system reformed so that the result of the commission's inquiry shall be turned into draft legislation to be put before the legislative bodies for debate and vote.
  - Public hearings.
  - Dissemination of information regarding standards via popular media.
- C. There should be more uniform national standards for access to social programs (e.g. education, health care), and more flexible standards for the content of those programs (e.g. what is taught, how health care is provided).
- D. Standards should be set to determine basic "needs" of Canadians.

**3. Process for Developing a Recommendation for a New Constitutional Amending Formula**

**A possible cause:**

Another possible cause of the current situation is that Canadians are dissatisfied with the process for amending the Constitution, but have not been able to proceed through official channels towards changing the system. In particular, it would be difficult to produce a new formula through official channels when certain groups feel unrepresented or underrepresented in the existing process.

**A possible approach:**

The federal government, provincial governments, First Nations and the territories shall develop a joint recommendation for a new amending formula.

