

The Edmonton Social Planning Council

Presentation to the Alberta Select Special Committee on Constitutional Reform

3:45 p.m., June 1 1991, Hilton Hotel, Edmonton

Background

The Edmonton Social Planning Council believes that reform of Canada's Constitution is of vital importance to all Canadians. Therefore, we welcome and appreciate the opportunity to provide our input to the current Constitutional reform process.

General Principles

We recognize and support the English-speaking, French-speaking, and aboriginal peoples in their role as founders of this country, while we also cherish the presence and contributions of those of many diverse origins.

Specific Recommendations

1) A Strong Federal Government

A strong federal government is essential in ensuring:

- the maintenance of national standards in social programs.
- the reduction of economic disparity between the regions.
- achievement of national immigration goals

2) Process of Constitutional Change

The current process has disenfranchised many Canadians. The process of change must be revised and broadened.

3) Aboriginal Rights

We support the aboriginal people of Canada in their demand to be included at all stages of the constitutional process.

Further, the rights of aboriginal people under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, which have not been fully defined, should be addressed as a national priority.

4) The "Notwithstanding" Clause

Human rights should be available nationally. Section 33, the "notwithstanding" clause, allows government to abrogate the basic rights and freedoms of Canadian Citizens. It should be removed.

5) Equality Provisions

We believe that Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the "equality" clause, should be broadened to provide for the inclusion of sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination.