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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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November 20, 1980

To all Members of the Constitutional Committee:

I recently had a two hour meeting with the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association concerning the resolution to patriate and amend Canada's Constitution.

The Thunder Bay Multicultural Association is an umbrella group embracing a number of organizations in Thunder Bay. This is a very hard working and responsible group and I feel that they have legitimate concerns on the proposed amendment. The group has taken the trouble, after a number of meetings and much thought, to prepare their position on the subject.

Also mentioned at the meeting was the Brief on Constitutional Reform which was submitted by the Canadian Polish Congress Incorporated Head Executive Board. I'm sure all concerned have received this brief and have read it with interest. If not, I would be very pleased to copy anyone upon request.

I really feel that, while I believe the present resolution doesn't change the position that we have always held in regards to the multicultural aspect in importance to Canada, great care should be taken to be sure that this important 1/3 of our population not have the perception that they are excluded from enjoying their traditional position within Canada.

Yours sincerely,

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Jack Masters

enc.

THUNDER BAY MULTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION'S
POSITION CONCERNING SOME PROPOSALS IN
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RESOLUTION TO
PATRIATE AND AMEND CANADA'S CONSTITUTION

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms included in the federal government's resolution to patriate and amend to constitution of Canada designates English and French as the official languages of Canada, and provides minority language educational rights for the two official language groups.

As these provisions do not affect only the English and French languages and the official language minority groups, but have important implications on the status of all other linguistic and cultural minorities in Canada, we wish to make the following statements and recommendations to clarify our position on the proposed Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

- One. We support the provision concerning official languages. We recognize the special role of the two major languages, and therefore see the need for constitutional recognition of their official status.
- Two. We also support the proposal to entrench in the constitution the right of parents to have their children educated in the official language of their choice, except that this right should not be subject to some of the restrictions stated in the proposed charter. The right to choose the language of instruction should be treated as a basic human right to be enjoyed by all Canadian citizens and by all immigrants.
- Three. We firmly believe that these provisions make it necessary that appropriate constitutional recognition and protection be extended to other linguistic and cultural minorities. The Question of official languages and minority language educational rights of the two official language groups cannot be separated from the question of the status of other minority languages and cultures. To elevate the status of two languages and two minorities on one hand, and ignore the need for constitutional recognition and protection of all other minorities on the other, is to undermine the principle of cultural equality, which forms the basis of the federal government's policy on multiculturalism.
- Four. In view of these concerns, we recommend that the resolution to patriate and amend the constitution of Canada be amended to include the following:
 1. A statement indicating that Canada is a multicultural country.
 2. A statement indicating that the designation of English and French as the official languages of Canada does not imply priority with respect to culture.
 3. The right of ethnocultural groups to preserve and develop their cultures.
 4. The right of ethnocultural groups to equitable support and protection from the various levels of government, their agencies, and other educational and cultural institutions in their effort to preserve and develop their cultures and languages.
 5. The right of parents to educate their children in the official language of their choice to apply equally to all Canadian citizens and to all immigrants.