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Statement by the Prime Minister of Québec, M. Robert Bourassa, as regards the Victoria Constitutional Charter, Québec, June 23, 1971 (communiqué).

[Translation]

COMMUNIQUÉ

For immediate publication

The Constitutional Charter

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF QUÉBEC,
ROBERT BOURASSA

Québec, June 23, 1971 - The Prime Minister of Québec publicly made the following statement:

"Federalism represents for Quebecers the best means for attaining their economic, social and cultural objectives.

Quebecers supported this option of the government of Québec during the last general election.

In keeping with Quebecers' clearly expressed desire in this sense, the government will devote its efforts to reinforcing Canadian federalism. As such, it feels that federalism must be decentralized in order to reflect the diversity of the regions of our country. This federalism must also guarantee provinces the freedom of action they need for fully assuming their responsibilities with regard to their citizens; this federalism must also allow the government of Québec to ensure the cultural future of the majority of its population.

Constitutional review is precisely the way for giving us this type of federalism. Works undertaken over the past three years have allowed Canadians to progress in this direction. The recent conference of the First and Prime Ministers constituted a step in the right direction; important progress has been made regarding machinery for patriating and amending the constitution, political and linguistic rights, the status of the Supreme Court, etc.

In the current state of the constitutional reform project, the government of Québec cannot, however, make a positive recommendation to the National Assembly as regards the acceptance of the current Constitutional Charter project.

This decision stems from the need to agree insofar as possible on clear and precise constitutional texts, thereby avoiding a shift of responsibility to the judicial branch, as such responsibility first belongs to the political branch, i.e. to those the people have elected. As such, the texts dealing with income security still contain an uncertainty that squares poorly with the objectives inherent in any notion of constitutional review. If this uncertainty were to be eliminated, our conclusion could be different.

As such, the government of Québec intends on notifying the secretary of the Constitutional Conference that it cannot accept this draft Constitutional Charter.

This decision of the government of Québec is an appeal to every Canadian's capacity for innovation and determination and it urges them to pursue the task they have undertaken to give Canadians a truly modern constitution."

- 30 -

Source:
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