FOREWORD

This discussion paper is the text of a public address by the Honourable Robert L. Stanfield as the first Kenneth R. MacGregor Lecturer in Intergovernmental Relations. The address was delivered at Queen's University on 25 February 1985.

The MacGregor Lectureship was established in order to bring annually to Queen's University a distinguished individual who has made an important contribution to the understanding or practice of federalism, intergovernmental relations and related issues in Canada or other countries. The lectureship honours Kenneth R. MacGregor, a Queen's graduate, longtime member of the Queen's Board of Trustees, former Superintendent of Insurance for Canada, and retired Chairman of the Mutual Life Assurance Company of Canada. It is funded through the generosity of the company, members of the Queen's Board of Trustees, and friends.

Mr. Stanfield is currently Chairman of the Institute for Research on Public Policy. He is best known to Canadians for his contributions to public life over many years, especially as Premier of Nova Scotia from 1956 to 1967 and as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada from 1967 to 1976.

In this address, Mr. Stanfield draws on his personal experience in political leadership to argue the importance of having at least two truly national political parties, both of which strive for and obtain the trust of each region. What he says about the conditions for meeting this goal will be of interest to every Canadian who is concerned about his country.

Peter M. Leslie
May 1985

My views about the Canadian political system may not be orthodox, but it will not surprise you to learn that I believe they are about right. They have evolved over a long period of time, first while a student in the 'thirties, then while a politician in Nova Scotia in the 'fifties and 'sixties, then while the leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons trying to sort out the various constitutional cures coming from all directions, and latterly as the author of an occasional paper designed to shed light and also release my exasperation at the inability of others to understand this country.

Canada is an extraordinary country, although Canadians themselves tend to be a mixture of complacency and insecurity. Canada is, of course, imperfect, but it has precious qualities which were probably not foreseen by its fathers. When I was younger I did not find Canadian political problems of much interest in comparison with what was happening in the rest of the world. But as a politician in Nova Scotia I had to try to understand Canada. It takes some understanding.

Canadians do not agree on what Canada is or ought to be. That does not worry me. I think it is great. Canada has evolved into something quite different than

it was supposed to be. That is clear enough. Canada is still evolving and will continue to evolve as long as we do not agree on what Canada is. Fortunately that is likely to be a long time hence. I consider our recent constitutional exercise to have been a serious mistake, but not a fatal one. I hope that we will resist future temptations to fasten our notions of our country upon our children.

Of course, as Canadians we must face the problems of our country in our time and try to meet them. That will keep us busy enough. I assure you that I will not try to solve all our problems tonight. I will be discussing the nature of tensions peculiar to Canada and how we should cope with them.

For me the basic problem in Canadian politics is that Canadians boast about the diversity of Canada but do not accept this diversity or respect it. For me, statesmanship in Canada consists not of being tough and imposing on regions national policies which violate their profound aspirations and convictions, as in the case of the National Energy Program. For me, leadership consists rather in being tough and resourceful and pursuing policies which meet national needs in ways that are acceptable, although perhaps not popular, in all regions, as in the case of the Official Languages Act. For me, strengthening the powers of the federal government would not encourage such leadership and would not strengthen the country or its economy. For me, federal-provincial relations in Canada have been a constructive, although inadequate, process; not obstructive. For me, truly national political parties are essential to Canada and constitute our best hope of strengthening our country and meeting national needs.

And now, let me persuade you of these and other simple truths. First, regional diversity is an enduring reality in Canada and a basic quality of Canada. Such diversity is most obvious when we compare Quebec with the rest of Canada. While the rest of Canada looms monolithic to Quebecers, however, and does have

substantial cultural and linguistic unity, the economic history and interests of Atlantic and Western Canada differ substantially from those of central Canada.

The majority of Canadians sometimes do not respect these diversities. To the extent that they recognize them they sometimes expect a disaffected region to fall in line with the majority view. Sometimes the majority insist on this, identifying it with patriotism. Whenever this happens on an issue of basic importance to an unhappy region, the country pays a big price: an escalation of distrust. This may be unavoidable in a time of grave national emergency. I do not presume to pass judgment on the imposition of conscription in the First World War. But the price we pay is always high. And the imposition of the National Energy Program was not a response to a wartime emergency. It was rather Ottawa's response to the desire of eastern Canadians to get oil and gas at a favourable price. Again Canada paid a high price for imposing the will of the majority on a region which saw the National Energy Program as anti-western and hostile to enduring western aspirations.

It is not enough just to count heads in Canada in deciding which policies to pursue. It never is in a democracy, but it is especially not so in Canada. Regional diversities must be respected. To accept this would not be an admission of failure by Canadians, but the beginning of wisdom.

Many Canadians are concerned about Canadian identity and believe we should accentuate what we have in common. We do have a great deal in common and it is important to remind ourselves of this. This, however, is very different from pretending we are in agreement when we are not. That is not the way to enlarge our common ground. It is rather the way to create resentment and distrust and reduce what we have in common. Respecting diversity, on the other hand, strengthens the national feeling. It does not weaken it.

Some may ask why the will of the majority would not prevail in a democracy. Even in a small unitary state a majority must exercise restraint in imposing its views. Even in such a state the will of the majority is far from absolute. In Canada a region like Quebec or the West would have little reason to remain within the federation if it felt it was being governed in the interests of other regions of the country, virtually as a colony.

It is natural for a region to feel it is not getting as much out of the federation as other regions are, and that other regions have more say as to which policies are adopted. It can still feel warmly towards the country, and strive to get a better deal, as the Maritimes and the West did for years on freight rates. One cannot say precisely what would convince a region it should leave. A belief in Quebec that French language and culture would not flourish there would presumably be enough. But I am not thinking only of what would break up our country. I am thinking more of what strengthens or weakens it. Imposing a decision on a region on a matter of basic importance to it weakens the fabric of the country, weakens the willingness of the region to give and take on the lesser issues and make consensus more difficult to achieve in the future.

I am not arguing that Ottawa should always give in to a region. Ottawa should rather try to find answers to national problems that are acceptable to the regions even if not pleasing to all. Regions do not expect to get their own way entirely, although they naturally try. In the case of the Canadian petroleum policy following OPEC's dramatic increase in world oil prices, I do not suggest for a moment that Alberta should have been conceded all it was seeking. Actually, after some preliminary skirmishing, Ottawa and Alberta hammered out an acceptable compromise following the first big OPEC jump in prices in 1973. But following the OPEC jump of 1979, Ottawa simply tried, in 1980, to impose the will of the East on the West. That was not very bright.

On the other hand the policy of official bilingualism adopted in the late 'sixties was bold and imaginative. It was not popular in most of the country and probably not the first choice of any region, but it was believed to be capable of building support in all regions. That judgment involved risks, but I believe these were well worth taking and that the judgment is slowly being proven right. Contrast that with the growing fury provoked by the NEP in the West until that policy was substantially modified; and the side effects of this upon Western attitudes.

So when I speak about the importance of consensus in Canada I am not thinking merely of endless and demoralizing compromises, but rather of imaginative solutions designed to meet national goals, and indeed preferably embodying a national ideal; while respecting regional aspirations. This is a process that will often take time, but it is far better to take time than to create lasting resentments. Switzerland takes plenty of time to reach consensus and we think of Switzerland as a success.

I do not believe I minimize the difficulties, which are sometimes very great. I recognize, too, that leaders who have succeeded have been called politicians and not men of principle. Perhaps they were, but they understood their country. In any event, I am not calling for timidity from our leaders. I hope they will be daring. I simply ask that they respect the nature of our country.

None of this calls for more constitutional power in the hands of our central government. That would not help us. The conscription crisis was not due to lack of federal authority, and in the case of the NEP the limited federal jurisdiction over petroleum encouraged an eventual compromise, because Ottawa could not ignore the provinces concerned. They also had constitutional powers to exercise. We should stop worrying about the powers of the federal government and worry more about how they are used. This ought not to surprise a nation which has recently limited what legislatures and govern-

ments can do to individuals. We need to find a sensible way to limit what we do to Canadians who live in other regions.

Regional diversity is not something manufactured by provincial governments, although many Canadians seem to believe it often is. Canadians watch federal-provincial conferences on television and many conclude that provincial premiers are on ego trips, trying to be big fellows back home; that differences are fabricated or exaggerated and often not real. Viewers are apt to think: if only those damned politicians would work together. Well, I am not sure that provincial premiers are what they used to be when I was one. I admit too, that politicians have considerable egos. But it is misleading and dangerous to suggest that our problem is bickering among politicians and not real diversity of regional interest.

The big federal-provincial disputes of the last ten years or so were not just fights between the federal and provincial governments, although each such dispute produced dramatic confrontation between Ottawa and some provincial governments. There were, of course, struggles over revenue sharing and the costs of joint programs. These were more or less normal and by themselves would not have rocked the boat much. The drama in federal-provincial relations since 1975 has been created by three striking events: 1) sharp increases in oil prices brought on by OPEC and govermental reactions to these, 2) the election of the Parti Québécois in Quebec and its ramifications, and 3) Ottawa's decision to patriate the constitution, come what might.

The disputes these events provoked were conducted between provincial governments and Ottawa, but the disputes were basically between regions. The petroleum fight was over how much revenue from petroleum should stay in the western producing provinces and how much should be syphoned off by the rest of the country; and what prices should be imposed on the western producing provinces in the interest of eastern consumers. The

struggle was not just between the western provinces and Ottawa. The eastern regions and their governments were very much on Ottawa's side, although their governments may well have stayed quiet about it. They were happy to have Ottawa carry the ball on that play. Ottawa had interests of its own in the dispute, but it was able to further them, temporarily at least, because it had the support of the eastern regions. Nova Scotia and Newfoundland were possible exceptions, but they do not seriously modify my statement.

The tensions created by the election of the Parti Québécois were not just between Ottawa and Quebec. The other regions were emotionally very much on Ottawa's side on most issues raised by the P.Q. Seven provincial goverments worked with Quebec to get a better deal on the constitution from Ottawa; but as soon as they got it they abandoned Quebec.

In 1980 Ottawa had decided to go for patriation of the constitution with or without provincial agreement. In the 'sixties and 'seventies agreement had twice been reached with all provinces except Quebec. By 1980, however, the western provinces had become in their turn distrustful of the rest of the country and would no longer accept previously acceptable amending formulas. The "gang of eight" provinces devised a new formula acceptable to themselves. Then all the provinces except Quebec and Ottawa accepted a modification of that formula. This modified new formula was then imposed on Quebec. If this was the most serious blunder made in Canada for many generations, as I believe it was, the blunder was committed not just by Ottawa but by the English speaking provinces as well.

It is very wrong therefore to think of these three great disputes of the last decade in simple federal-provincial terms. Each had at the very least an essential regional ingredient. Western concerns were not contrivances of western provincial governments. Eastern desires were in the hearts of the people and not just in the minds of their premiers. Quebec's opposition to the

constitutional settlement was not just a contrivance of its provincial government.

Even if we could eliminate all the egotism, posturing and verbosity of provincial premiers and Canadian prime ministers, we would still be confronted by a fundamental characteristic of our country. Canada contains a great diversity of regional interests and concerns, and we have an inadequate respect for these, other than our own. It is ostrich-like for us to pretend that rows between our governments are simply rows between governments, although admittedly governments can exacerbate our differences, intentionally or unintentionally.

If I am correct in my description of our problem we would not help matters by strengthening the powers of our central government, even if we could. Indeed, doing so might make things worse, because a stronger central government might be tempted to impose its views despite regional concerns and thereby do damage difficult to repair. I repeat, the important question for Canadians is how the powers of Ottawa are used, not their adequacy. That is fortunate, because we could not get through a constitutional amendment increasing Ottawa's powers anyway.

Let me dwell on this point, because many Canadians, including many Canadian scholars, are convinced that we need a stronger central government in Canada. This is a belief based on a bias reflecting the kind of Canada they would like to see. One seldom finds this belief among francophone scholars, who usually favour a more decentralized country.

Nothing in this lecture is to be construed as an argument in favour of a greater decentralization of constitutional powers. I accept Mr. Trudeau's position that the way to make Canada more attractive to Quebecers is by making Canadian institutions more attractive to them; and that we do not do that by reducing the powers of Ottawa and increasing the powers of Quebec. That would make the government of Quebec, not the govern-

R.L. Stanfield

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ment of Canada, more important for Quebecers. I accept that. For Quebecers, as for other Canadians, the more important question is how Ottawa uses its powers.

I realize that Sir John A. Macdonald and his fellow fathers envisioned a stronger central government than we have. I accept the view that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council created a more decentralized constitution than was intended by Sir John. But I do not believe that Sir John A.'s highly centralized federal system would have been any more appropriate for the Canada that developed than the unitary system which was rejected as unworkable.

It may be said that the United States has gone just the opposite direction from Canada. During the 1930s and subsequently the United States Supreme Court changed course and enlarged the federal jurisdiction, while cutting down the powers of states. Assuming for our purposes that this was a good thing, which not all Americans would admit, it by no means follows that it would have been a good thing if done in Canada. The two countries differ in at least two important respects. First, the United States is a melting pot or tries to be. The diversity it respects is an individual diversity, not linguistic or cultural diversity. Canada respects bilingualism, which is hardly consistent with a highly centralized constitution. Secondly, the United States is not dominated economically and electorally by one area, as central Canada dominates Ottawa. The northeastern region of the United States may once have been such an area, but it is not today. Power to dominate Washington is much more widely dispersed. A powerful Washington is not now the cause of concern a more powerful Ottawa would be to Quebec or the West.

I suggest that the division of powers in Canada, while not perfect, does suit our country quite well. Some say that we have the weakest central government of any federation in the world. If they are referring to constitutional powers they are talking nonsense. If they are talking about the degree of regional diversity and

the difficulty in achieving a consensus, they have a point, but they are obscuring the problem by suggesting that Ottawa would perform better for the country if it had more power.

Many Canadians seem to believe that we need a stronger federal government to strengthen our economy. They suggest that the way things are Ottawa is unable to implement a national economic strategy. Let us be honest. If we are today in financial and economic difficulties in Canada we helped create these by the exercise of central power. Any lack of economic success has not been caused by Ottawa's weakness but rather by our lack of wisdom. For the past decade or so we generally have not known what to do about our economy. When we have seen the right course to take, as in the case of the multilateral tariff reductions, Ottawa has had the necessary power to act. Usually, however, we have just been messing around. We should be thankful we have not had more centrally available power to misuse on our economy.

Some Canadians are tearing their hair about all the money Ottawa pays to the provinces in the form of tax sharing and in equalization and cost sharing programs. They say these federal expenditures are so large and so beyond control that Ottawa can no longer use fiscal policy effectively to control the rate of economic growth in the Keynesian sense. To the extent that this is true it is the consequence of the past exercise of power by Ottawa, not the lack of power.

The largest part of what Ottawa pays to the provinces goes to finance Ottawa's share of programs it has persuaded the provinces to adopt, like medicare and the hospital plan. In a very real sense these are federal programs, designed to serve national objectives; programs which are administered by the provinces and roughly half paid for by the provinces. They are excellent programs and they are in areas of provincial jurisdiction, but they were devised by Ottawa, and provinces must still comply with governing rules laid down by the federal government. Rather than complain

about Ottawa's involvement, an involvement that Ottawa eagerly sought, admirers of central power in Canada should be thankful that Ottawa does not have to pay the whole cost of these programs.

It is high time we put aside mythology that has grown up around federal-provincial relations. Shared cost programs in health and welfare are expensive for both Ottawa and the provinces. But these programs in their present form were not undertaken because of the provincial pressure. They were not foisted on a generous Ottawa by insistent provinces. If any foisting was done it was done by Ottawa. The reality is that these are good programs and nobody has taken more credit for them than federal ministers.

I will go further. The federal-provincial forum has generally served well. There will always be a lot of wearisome talk and a good deal of acting involved in any federal-provincial negotiation. It is as nothing compared to the talking and acting in Parliament. Television watchers who get bored or irritated should tune out rather than get angry. It is all part of the Canadian democracy and with skillful national leadership the process helps the country find a consensus. This will not happen if Ottawa does not seek a consensus, as was the case in the petroleum dispute; and it will not happen if regional worries are too profound and too conflicting to permit consensus, as would be the case in any wide-ranging attempt to redistribute powers under our constitution. I claim that the federal-provincial forum is constructive. I do not claim it can accomplish the impossible.

The possibilities and the limits of the process were well understood in the 'fifties and 'sixties and the results were impressive. We did not quite get unanimous agreement on an amending formula, but we nearly did. Significant joint programs were negotiated and adopted, such as the hospital and medicare programs. Federal-provincial agreements assured coordination of administration in important fields of joint jurisdiction. To

appreciate the significance of this one should experience the chaos in the United States in areas of joint jurisdiction. In the 'fifties and 'sixties federal and provincial bureaucrats in Canada respected each other and cooperated. Tax sharing and revenue equalization arrangements were developed in order to ensure a basic standard of services in all provinces.

Some may suggest that the constructive federal-provincial arrangements of the 'fifties and 'sixties were due largely to Ottawa's generosity, which was made possible by rapid growth in Ottawa's revenues generated by rapid economic growth. Admittedly, a financially strapped federal government is not likely to influence provincial governments as effectively as a flush one. Ottawa probably lost respect when it seemed to have the answers for inflation and unemployment, as came to pass in the 'seventies. Factors like these could put a strain on federal-provincial relations, but they ought not in themselves to render these relations chaotic and obstructive. Indeed, a sense of deep national difficulty across the land should encourage provincial governments to respond to national leadership. There is nothing more patriotic than a provincial premier in front of a microphone during a clearly perceived national crisis.

I am not suggesting that federal-provincial conferences are enough by themselves to ensure that we can pursue national objectives while respecting regional aspirations. We need something more. I not only admit this. I emphasize it. But we need the federal-provincial forum.

Much time and energy has been spent on arguing about the role a reformed Senate could play. I believe the Senate could strengthen the regional voice at the centre in Ottawa, but only marginally unless we moved to an elected Senate, which in itself would create new problems. Besides, this would require a constitutional amendment which would need a far greater degree of consensus in the country than is likely to exist in the foreseeable future. So the Senate, while it can be

helpful, is not likely to be a strong force in helping the country reach consensus on our problems.

But suppose we had at least two national political parties strongly committed to representing the whole country. This would mean at least two parties committed to retaining substantial support in each region of the country. What a world of difference this would make in our respect for diversity! Each such party would be trying to present policies that would meet national needs while commanding substantial respect in each region. That would require able leadership committed to that goal and it would require the support of a disciplined party that accepted the goal. These two requirements are not remote dreams. For decades they were the foundations on which the Liberal Party built its remarkable political success. Whatever else he does I am sure that the new Liberal leader will try to restore those foundations, because it will be obvious to him that Tory weakness in Quebec made the long Liberal hegemony possible, and that Liberal abandonment of the West in the 'seventies made it possible for the Tories to challenge the Liberals and build credibility as a potentially national party.

I hope it is now accepted within the Tory Party that their long failure in Quebec made it easy for the Liberals to retain power. The Tories had to concede about eighty seats to the Liberals before the polls opened: seats in Quebec and other seats with a substantial francophone vote. This made it very difficult for the Tories to get a majority in the House of Commons. Even in the sweep of 1984, if you subtract the eighty odd seats that Brian Mulroney picked up in Quebec and in constituencies where the francophone vote is significant, he would barely have achieved a clear majority.

If the Liberals and the Tories now recognize that they must have the trust and respect of each region if they wish their party to be consistently strong we will have at least two truly national parties which respect diversity, and we can expect over time a reduction in regional tensions. If the Tories had been a force in Quebec in

the 'sixties and 'seventies the Liberals would never have risked turning their backs on the West in the 'seventies. And if the Tories had offered Quebecers an attractive alternative to the Liberals in the 'sixties and 'seventies Quebecers might not have felt it necessary to develop their own alternatives to the Liberals, such as the Parti Québécois. A Canada with two national parties might have looked much more attractive to Quebecers. Consider the apparent change in attitudes in Quebec towards Ottawa since the Mulroney victory. No doubt there is more than one factor in this, but the feeling in Quebec that Ottawa may now offer alternatives worth exploring is surely an important factor. Mr. Trudeau used to emphasize the importance of Canadian political institutions being attractive to Quebecers. Our political parties are very important political institutions.

I am using the Liberals and Conservatives simply to illustrate my point and not to ignore the NDP, which is, of course, subject to the same national discipline as the others. My point is that there is a national discipline which political parties in Canada must accept or spend most of their existence in the political wilderness. We should recognize and accept this discipline.

One of our problems is that many politicians have refused to recognize that discipline. They have believed that their party could win even if they took positions that were unacceptable to a region; or perhaps because of that! They, and those who voted for them, have believed that their views could somehow prevail, even if they were abhorrent to a region such as Quebec or the West.

Some Canadian politicians, including some party leaders, who have not accepted this discipline, have flirted with what they call electoral reform to make it easier for parties to secure representation in a region where they are weak. Under this so called reform if the Progressive Conservatives got 20 per cent of the vote in Quebec, for example, they would win a percentage of newly created members at large that would be assigned to Quebec.

Such a move should be opposed. It might well destroy the national discipline I have been speaking about. It would certainly weaken it.

If a party gets only 15 per cent or 20 per cent or even 25 per cent of the votes in a region election after election, as was true of the Progressive Conservatives in Quebec and the Liberals in the West, that Party has something wrong with it. We should not make it easy for such a party to pick up cheap seats in that region. We should keep on the heat to force it to become truly national in outlook as well as ambition. I believe that both the Liberals and Conservatives have now learned the hard way. That lesson should not be undone. Any argument about the fairness of proportional representation is far more than offset by the importance to the country of encouraging parties to be national.

There is another political discipline which should be mentioned; party discipline imposed on votes in Parliament. The role of party discipline on the national scene is much misunderstood. I realize that some, perhaps many, Canadians who wish a stronger voice for their region in Parliament frown on party discipline and prefer free votes, so that MPs from all parties in their region can vote together for their region. That is a recipe for chaos. Members from all regions within a party must work together to work out acceptable solutions to national problems. This process will not necessarily please all regions. Sometimes it will not really please any region. But it can be acceptable to all regions, and it can meet the national need it was intended to meet. Of course, MPs would often prefer to demand more for their region and vote against the consensus reached within their party. That would be far more popular back home. But it would be shirking the national responsibility every MP in Canada has and must accept. There may be times when a region will find it necessary to reject all national parties and elect regional representatives, but if that were more than a temporary phenomenon government could hardly continue because it would mean that no

national party could establish a workable consensus. We are, I believe, a long way from that in Canada.

I am not suggesting that national political parties will by themselves assure good government in Canada. They cannot, for example, replace federal-provincial conferences. We need those. The Prime Minister has rightly consented to have them annually. A national political party cannot represent the interests or concerns of provincial political parties or provincial governments. The knowledge politicians in the federal field have of concerns within the provincial jurisdiction is likely to be very limited. They are not elected to negotiate for their provincial government or to speak for it. When I was premier of Nova Scotia I believed the province was fortunate in its representatives in the House of Commons, but we did not rely on them to present the concerns of the provincial government to the federal government or to other provincial governments.

Federal-provincial conferences and agreements are desirable even if they do short-circuit provincial legislatures and the Parliament of Canada. Admittedly, it is difficult in practice for a provincial legislature or the House of Commons to reject or modify such an agreement once it has been negotiated. In a sense such negotiations are an arrogation of power by the executive, but the agreements can be rejected, and the procedure helps make our federation work.

National political parties are not a panacea for all our national ills, but they offer the only available way to deal with problems basic to democratic government in Canada. Yet Canadians are very casual about political parties. Most Canadians regard them as at best a necessary evil and wish to have little or nothing to do with them. Can we afford to be so casual about a basic institution of government?

I am not an alarmist. The indications are that our political parties operating in national politics are still very resilient. The Progressive Conservative party, for

example, in the last couple of decades went through the turmoil of removing two national leaders from office, survived a more or less constant struggle over what the party was to stand for, and emerged from it all as perhaps the dominant national party in the country.

Yet there are causes for concern. Most Canadians are not only largely indifferent about political parties, they give their allegiance to special interest organizations which focus on their particular concerns, whether these be selfish or altruistic. We are in danger of becoming a society of highly organized special interest groups. Yet political parties have to try to reconcile their conflicting demands. No one else will.

Parties may be in danger of being taken over by special interest organizations, which have dedicated workers to do such a job. A party is now a more attractive target than it used to be, because it can issue tax credits in exchange for party contributions. Had the Progressive Conservative party been taken over during the turbulence of 1983 Canadian politics would have become highly polarized whether we wanted that or not. The effort was defeated.

Canadians do not really know what motivates those who work for our political parties now. And most Canadians really do not care. They only care when they hear that some have been rewarded. I am not here to defend patronage, but it is time we recognized that party service is public service, important public service, and gave it the respect we give other community service.

We cannot afford to be indifferent about our political parties, whatever our political beliefs. If they lose out to special interest organizations they will not disappear, but they will in turn become special interest organizations, not the national political parties we need for the good government of Canada. It is time we woke up.

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