

FOR RELEASE:  
Thursday, April 16, 1981

Executive Council

BLAKENEY PLEASED WITH 'MADE-IN-CANADA' PATRIATION PLAN

Saskatchewan Premier Allan Blakeney said at the meeting of eight premiers in Ottawa today that he is pleased the premiers have succeeded in negotiating a patriation plan for a 'made-in-Canada' constitution.

He said the premiers' patriation plan will allow Canadians to make decisions in Canada about the constitution. The United Kingdom Parliament would not be asked to vote on details of our constitution, but only to pass legislation putting an end to its responsibility for amendments to the British North America Acts.

Premier Blakeney said that under the amending formula proposed by the eight provinces, almost all constitutional amendments would require the consent of the House of Commons, the Senate, and the Legislative Assemblies of two-thirds of the provinces representing 50 per cent of the total population of Canada.

Amendments on a very limited number of fundamental issues such as the role of the monarchy would require the consent of all provincial legislatures as well as the federal Parliament.

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In special cases where proposed constitutional amendments would diminish provincial powers, provinces are able to "opt out" if they follow certain stringent conditions:

- a dissenting resolution must be passed in the provincial legislature by an absolute majority of all members;
- the resolution must be passed before the constitutional amendment is proclaimed;
- a province can reverse a dissent at any time, again by a majority vote of the provincial legislature;
- once a province has decided to accept an amendment, it cannot reverse that decision after the amendment has been proclaimed.

The Premier said the provinces' amending formula is a significant improvement on the one proposed by the federal government:

- No single province is given a permanent veto;
- There is no potentially divisive referendum provision;
- The Senate has power only to delay constitutional amendments, not to block them completely;
- A method is included for dealing flexibly with the delegation of legislative authority from one level of government to another.

"What we have achieved is a flexible document, open to change but strong enough to protect the genuine interests of both the federal and provincial orders of government. I believe it will serve Canada well," Premier Blakeney said.

"It is our responsibility now to engage in that final round of negotiations which will result in a patriation plan acceptable to the whole Canadian community."