



Ontario supports the entrenchment in the constitution of a Charter of Rights because we believe that governments and the people must make an explicit commitment to the preservation and enhancement of the liberties of individuals. In this way our democracy will be rooted in the consciousness of every Canadian and thereby strengthened.

A statement of our rights should:

1. affirm our commitment to the fundamental freedoms and democratic rights that underpin our democracy;
2. declare and preserve such basic legal rights which are best served by inclusion in a Charter of Rights;
3. reaffirm the obligation of the Parliament of Canada and federal institutions to operate in both official languages;
4. ensure the availability of minority language education throughout Canada where numbers warrant; and

5. provide criminal trials in the official language of the accused.

I should like to stress the importance Ontario attaches to the principle of minority language education. We believe it is a fundamental principle of Canadian life that a child, whether he or she be part of the French-speaking or English-speaking minority in any province, should be able to receive his or her education in his or her mother tongue.

Ontario is proud of the fact, that, if a French-speaking Quebecer comes to work in Ontario, he can educate his children in French throughout his primary, secondary and tertiary education; we believe Canadians who speak English should have that right in Quebec; we believe all Canadians should have that right nationwide.

Similarly, we believe that an accused should be tried in the official language he chooses anywhere in Canada, so that no citizen will be placed at a disadvantage before the courts because of the official language he speaks.

We live in a pluralistic society made up of different ethno-cultural groups whose aspirations to live and grow in freedom demand guarantees of their right of choice in the preservation and development of their respective cultural and linguistic heritage. Despite the fairness of our British parliamentary system, the sovereignty of Parliament and British jurisprudence, a charter of political rights with some legal rights, would reinforce the sense of freedom and protection which all our people possess, thereby contributing directly to real freedom for all of us.

When we talk of rights, we must always keep in mind the rights of Canada's native peoples, which is a matter of great concern to them and all of us. While we are dealing in the proposals before us primarily with individual rights, Ontario is certainly committed to an early discussion in the second round of our negotiations to work out the best method of enshrining native rights in the constitution.

A Charter of Rights must embody respect for minority rights and individual liberties, while remaining true to Canadian traditions.