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BUSINESS COUNCIL ON NATIONAL ISSUES · CONSEIL CANADIEN DES CHEFS D'ENTREPRISES

**OTTAWA
EMBARGO
AUGUST 27, 1992
9:00 A.M. E.D.T.**

BUSINESS LEADERS WELCOME CONSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENT

The unanimous agreement of First Ministers, Aboriginal leaders and the representatives of the Territories on revisions to Canada's constitution was welcomed today by the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI).

The Business Council is Canada's senior business organization composed of the chief executives of 150 leading Canadian enterprises located throughout Canada and representing every major economic sector.

The Council's Chairman, J. Edward Newall, said "the comprehensive Agreement is a vote of confidence in Canada and in the abilities of Canadians to reconcile their differences in a constructive way".

"The resolution of the constitutional deadlock which has gripped Canadians for so long will have major benefits", he said. "It should lead to a much stronger sense of unity among citizens across the land and to a reconciliation of historical differences which have sapped our energies as a people".

The BCNI's President and Chief Executive, Thomas d'Aquino, added that "the Agreement will signal to the economic community in Canada and abroad that Canadians are prepared to put their political house in order and to turn their full attention to the country's paramount priorities, namely achieving a sound and durable economic recovery, and putting in place policies aimed at building a more dynamic and competitive economy".

Acknowledging the fragile nature of the understandings reached in Ottawa on August 22, the Council leaders urged the First Ministers, the Aboriginal leaders and representatives of the Territories to spare no efforts in seeking agreement on a final text in Charlottetown this week and to move quickly towards ratification.

Mr. Newall and Mr. d'Aquino expressed severe disappointment in the refusal of First Ministers to take the necessary steps to guarantee in the constitution the free movement of people, services, and capital as well as goods.

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"In backing away from significant steps to strengthen the economic union, Canada's political leaders have missed an historic opportunity to correct a major flaw in the existing constitution", Mr. Newall and Mr. d'Aquino said. "In so doing, they also have ignored the appeals of the vast majority of the Canadian business community and a great number of Canadians who believe that internal barriers and economic discrimination have no place in a progressive, industrial democracy with global economic aspirations".

Mr. Newall and Mr. d'Aquino confirmed that the BCNI will continue to press for the establishment of a true economic union in Canada and for much improved intergovernmental co-ordination of economic policy.

The Business Council on National Issues has had a long involvement in addressing the issues of political governance. Council Task Forces have been active since the early 1980s in suggesting ways in which constitutional reforms can lead to more effective political institutions and to an improved economic functioning of Canadian federalism.

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