

Reform Party

Office of the Leader

NewsRelease

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Reform presents New Confederation proposals

OTTAWA - Reform Party Leader Preston Manning and unity critic Stephen Harper today presented Reform's New Confederation proposals, a package of 20 measures to modernize and decentralize Canada.

"Our proposals would permit future governments to respond more effectively to the needs of ordinary Canadians by reducing Ottawa's centralizing powers, which are historically a frustration to those both inside and outside Quebec," said Manning.

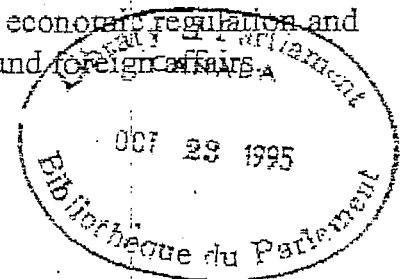
Among the 20 proposals, Reform would guarantee provincial control over natural resources, language and culture. Reform would also change the federal role in regards to provincially-administered social services such as welfare, education and health care. Reform would foster cooperative agreements rather than impose unilateral standards by threatening to withhold federal funding.

"We propose measures which will assert the autonomy of all provinces and the power of the people well into the future," said Harper. "Canadians have long been concerned about concentrating too much power in the hands of the federal executive and cabinet. Canadians are demanding a new and more accountable system of government."

Each of the 20 changes proposed by the Reform party could be accomplished without comprehensive federal-provincial negotiations of the sort that led to the failed Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords. In all cases, Reform's New Confederation proposals simply require a federal government that is willing to act.

"Canadians want change, not more constitutional wrangling," said Harper. "Reform's proposals can be accomplished without re-opening old constitutional wounds."

Reform's proposals would retain key federal powers to maintain a common economic space, eliminate internal trade barriers, create and coordinate important areas of economic regulation and represent Canada effectively in international trade negotiations, defence and foreign affairs.



"Canadians told us they want Canada to be a balanced and equal federation in which Ottawa plays a cooperative rather than a domineering role," added Harper. "This is what we propose. There will be no special status, formally or informally, for Quebec or any other province."

Reform's New Confederation proposals include:

DECENTRALIZATION OF POWERS

1. **Natural Resources**
Guarantee exclusive provincial control.
2. **Manpower Training**
Guarantee exclusive provincial control.
3. **Social Services**
Change the role of the federal government to foster cooperative Interprovincial agreements rather than imposing unilateral standards by withholding transfer payments.
4. **Language**
Replace the Official Languages Act with a new law, the Regional Bilingualism Act, that would recognize the demographic and linguistic realities of Canada and the practices of provincial authorities.
5. **Culture**
Make provincial governments the primary providers and guardians of cultural services and primary regulators of cultural industries.
6. **Municipal Affairs**
Strengthen the role of municipal governments in the delivery of essential services.
7. **Housing**
Guarantee exclusive provincial control.
8. **Tourism**
Guarantee exclusive provincial control.
9. **Sports and Recreation**
Guarantee exclusive provincial control.
10. **Spending Power**
Forbid new federal spending programs in provincial jurisdiction.
11. **Transfers to the Provinces**
Replace federal cash block grants with tax point grants.

12. **Charter Challenges**
End the Court Challenges program and its tax-funded court challenges of provincial legislation.
13. **Disallowance, Reserve, and Declaratory Powers.**
Remain dormant under a Reform government.

REFORM OF INSTITUTIONS

14. **House of Commons**
Permit greater freedom for individual MPs; wider use of referenda, citizens' initiatives and recall.
15. **Senate of Canada**
All future appointments to the Senate would be made by means of elections on the model of the 1989 Alberta Senate selection process.
16. **Supreme Court and Judiciary**
Future appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada would be made by the provincial legislatures; all appointments reviewed by elected Senate.
17. **Bank of Canada**
Future board appointments made by provincial legislatures. Ottawa would continue to select the Governor of the Bank.
18. **Lieutenant Governors**
Appointed by provincial legislatures.
19. **Tax, Debt and Expenditure Limitation**
Unilaterally amend the Constitution to forbid deficit spending or rapid spending increases, except when authorized by a national referendum.
20. **Constitutional Referendums**
Introduce a motion in the House of Commons that all future constitutional amendments must be approved by majorities in all regions of Canada through a referendum.

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