

Belanger-Campeau

In 1990, immediately after the collapse of the Meech Lake Accord, the National Assembly established the 'Belanger-Campeau Commission' (formally known as the Commission on the Political and Constitutional Future of Quebec), on the initiative of Premier Robert Bourassa. Its mandate was to examine the political and constitutional status of Quebec and to make recommendations for change in a report to the National Assembly no later than 28 March 1991. Its work proceeded concurrently with, but was entirely separate from, that of the Quebec Liberal Party's constitutional committee headed by Jean Allaire (see Allaire Report).

The 'Belanger-Campeau Commission' was carefully constructed to create a balance between federalists and sovereignists. The co-chairmen, Michel Belanger (a federalist) and Jean Campeau (a sovereignist) were selected by consultation between Premier Bourassa and Parti Québécois leader Jacques Parizeau, as were most of the other members. Both Bourassa and Parizeau were themselves members of the commission. Other members were selected to represent the three parties in the National Assembly, the two federal parties with elected members from Quebec, municipal government, business, organized labour, the cooperative movement, and the educational and cultural sectors. There was no explicit effort to represent ethnic minorities, although one of the business representatives and two of the political party representatives were Anglophones.

The 'Belanger-Campeau Commission' held extensive public hearings and presented its report just before the 28 March 1991 deadline. Predictably, it could agree on little of substance, and several members or groups of members made individual statements that were appended to the report. It recommended that the National Assembly establish two committees, one to examine the question of Quebec sovereignty and the other to consider proposals for partnership that might be made by the Government of Canada. It also recommended that a referendum on Quebec sovereignty take place in 1992. The National Assembly modified the latter recommendation to provide that the referendum could be on either sovereignty or reformed federalism. These recommendations contributed to the Charlottetown Accord, which the people of Quebec and Canada rejected in simultaneous referenda in October 1992.

Sources:

- Commission on the Political and Constitutional Future of Quebec (1991).
- P.H. Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 2d ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
- J. Lisee, *The Trickster: Robert Bourassa and Quebecers, 1990-1992*, trans. R. Chodos, S.Horn & W. Taylor (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1994).