FOREWORD

Canada is one of the world's most successful countries. By any measurement — economic prosperity, social justice, quality of life — Canadians enjoy a range of advantages among the most generous in the world. Little understood or appreciated by many Canadians is how important a role our political system and government institutions have been in the realization of these achievements. In consistently delivering a high degree of "peace, order and good government," they have provided the stability and the confidence upon which so much has been built. Much of the credit for this success is due to federalism which has allowed for flexibility and diversity in a country marked by its great size, and significant differences in its regions and peoples.

Today, status quo federalism is under attack. In western Canada, the demands for change are growing stronger. And in Quebec, the failure of the Meech Lake Accord has sparked a powerful movement among some for greater autonomy, and among others, for full political sovereignty. These rising expectations for change to Canada's political system come at a time when the country is engaged in a profound economic adjustment, to a large extent imposed by global economic forces.

Recognizing that a sound and workable political system is the prerequisite of progress and success in the economic and social domains, the Business Council on National Issues decided in July 1990, to launch a number of initiatives aimed at achieving a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian federalism as we know it now and to examine ways of making federalism work better in the future. A key part of this initiative was to assemble a group of Canada's leading authorities on constitutional reform to consider options for the country's future constitutional development. Under the leadership of Professor Ronald Watts, Director of the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations at Queen's University, a team of political scientists, economists, lawyers, and constitutional scholars drawn from all parts of Canada worked on the project. The papers in this volume reflect the views of the individual members of the team as they were presented at an all-day symposium sponsored by the Business Council on National Issues in Toronto on 16 January 1991. It is with pride that the Council has agreed to sponsor the work of the project team and to make possible this publication.

As the debate about Canada's future in the coming months intensifies, it is vital that the discussion be based on a sound understanding of the problems and opportunities that face us as a people. The Business Council looks forward to playing a constructive role in the debate and to being guided in part by the excellent insights offered by the papers in this volume.

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