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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2AT

1 March 1982

My dear Premier,

[Handwritten initials]

[Handwritten initials]

Thank you for your letter of 15 February about the Canada Bill.

As you will know, the Bill received its Second Reading in the House of Commons on 17 February. In his speech opening the debate, the Lord Privy Seal reflected the reasons why the Government have decided that it is right for us to go ahead with the Bill notwithstanding the position of Quebec. While we naturally regret that the present proposals do not enjoy the unanimous support of the Provinces, we have given weight to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada of 28 September 1981. We believe that the agreement of nine out of the ten Provinces constitutes a substantial measure of support for the proposals and we therefore feel we would not be justified in declining to act upon the request by the Federal Government and Parliament.

Similarly, our view is that it would not be proper for the United Kingdom Parliament to amend the Canada Bill, because to do so would introduce an element which had not been requested by the Parliament of Canada and would thus be inconsistent with the convention recited in the third preambular paragraph of the Statute of Westminster which we believe is the correct principle in considering how to interpret the role of the United Kingdom Parliament in the amendment of the British North America Acts.

I regret therefore that I have to say that I am unable to do as you ask in your letter.

Yours sincerely
Francis Pym
FRANCIS PYM

The Hon René Lévesque
Premier of Quebec

1 MAR 1982

