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Mr. Nick Sibbeston  
Government Leader of the  
North West Territories  
Laing Building, 6th Floor  
Yellowknife (N.W.T.)

Mr. Leader of the Government:

I thank you for your letter dated May 26, concerning the constitutional talks being held pursuant to the Meech Lake Accord.

I understand very well your position with respect to the North West Territories being absent from said talks. Nevertheless, I must stress the very special venue of the current negotiations which essentially aim at redressing the situation, both abnormal and unwarranted, subsequent to the constitutional agreement of 1981.

I especially find it particularly difficult, at this very sensitive step, to imagine how the existing rules could be changed with respect to the participation of the North West Territories and Yukon in the First Ministers Conference on the Constitution. I grant you that leaders of the Territories were invited as observers at the constitutional discussions on aboriginal rights, for reasons of an obvious nature. Even at that, constitutional discussions of a more formal scope have always been held with the exclusive participation of the Federal and Provincial Governments.

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Among the significant progress registered through the Meech Lake Accord is the entrenchment of an annual Conference of the First Ministers on the Constitution. This will undoubtedly constitute a more appropriate forum to discuss your views about a formal participation of the Territories in future Constitutional Conferences. I hereby inform you that I will have no objection to undertake such a discussion once the current negotiations have allowed Québec join again the Canadian Federation as well as Canada to enjoy a more effective and appropriate constitutional dynamics.

Yours truly,

Robert Bourassa