



Narrator: On the night of April 17, 1982, there was a CBC television broadcast of the day's events on Parliament Hill.

Reporter: Today, Canada's Constitution came home. Queen Elizabeth signed it into law. Prime Minister Trudeau opened the ceremony by speaking to all Canadians. Here is part of what he said.

Trudeau (with authority): What we are celebrating today is not so much the completion of our task, but the renewal of our hope – not so much an ending, but a fresh beginning.

Reporter: As the rain began to fall on Parliament Hill, Queen Elizabeth signed the document. As soon as she did this, the Constitution Act of 1982 officially became the law of Canada. Then, Prime Minister Trudeau signed it. Their signatures were witnessed by Minister of Justice and Attorney General Jean Chrétien and Registrar General André Ouellet. The Queen ended the ceremony with these remarks.

Queen Elizabeth: Differences persist. In this vast and vigorous land, they always will. The genius of Canadian federalism, however, lies in your consistent ability to overcome differences through reason and compromise. That ability is reflected in the willingness of the ordinary people of French-speaking and English-speaking Canada, and of the various regions, to respect each other's rights, and to create together the conditions under which all may prosper in freedom.



Reporter: Not everyone in Canada is happy about today's events. To help explain, Minister of Justice and Attorney General Jean Chrétien is here with us this evening.

Minister Chrétien, at the ceremony today, I spoke to a group of grade 5 students from John A. Macdonald Elementary School in Ottawa. They told me they were very happy that the constitution was finally home in Canada. What would you tell them about Quebec's stand on the patriation of the constitution?

Chrétien: The Constitution Act of 1982 guarantees linguistic rights to all Canadians. Quebec's culture and language will be protected by this new constitution. However, it is also true that Premier René Lévesque has not signed the agreement.

Reporter: And why did he not sign?

Chrétien: You would have to ask him. Obviously, Premier Lévesque could not agree with the terms of the new constitution.

Reporter: Yet it is interesting to note that, except for the Queen, all the others who signed today's document were Members of Parliament from Quebec: Pierre Trudeau, André Ouellet, and yourself. As the Minister of Justice, how do you feel about the new Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Chrétien: It is an important part of the new constitution because it guarantees the rights of all Canadians.

Reporter: What specific rights are protected by the new Charter?