

Deborah Coyne

Unscripted: A Life Devoted to Building a Better Canada (2013)

1. Politics Matter	2
2. Growing Up	7
3. Political Awakening	9
4. Path to Political Engagement	14
5. Citizen Activist	17
6. Kindred Spirits	25
7. Newfoundland and Labrador	28
8. High Stakes: Rolling the Dice	32
9. Motherhood	36
10. Charlottetown: History Repeats Itself	38
11. Post Meech and Charlottetown	41
12. One Canada for All Canadians	43

1. Politics Matter

Long ago I slipped into the habit of closing down the night by watching *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and Stephen Colbert's *The Colbert Report*. Full disclosure: I'm more upset if I miss Stewart and Colbert than I am if I don't manage to tune in to the conventional news programs. I just wish Stewart and Colbert's Canadian counterparts, *The Rick Mercer Report* and *This Hour has 22 Minutes*, were aired more frequently. There is something therapeutic about watching brilliant satire that highlights the absurd depths to which democratic politics has plunged in recent years.

On August 28, 2010, when Fox News' conservative commentator Glenn Beck held a "Restoring Honor" rally at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, Stewart and Colbert saw an opportunity. Stewart announced that on October 30, he would be hosting a "Rally to Restore Sanity," and Colbert announced his own "March to Keep Fear Alive." (They later combined the events into the "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear.")

So, a couple of days before Halloween, I enthusiastically drove the ten hours to Philadelphia to pick up my daughter, Sarah, a business student at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, and went on to reach Washington in the early hours of the morning. Why? Well, as I explained to Sarah, who, like most of her friends, has little interest in the circus sideshow that passes for national politics in either the U.S. or Canada, I wanted to witness in person a brilliant comedian like Stewart (along with his co-conspirator, Colbert) inspiring citizens to gather in solidarity to protest mediocrity and parochial politics.

We weren't disappointed. It took us over an hour just to get on the crowded subway that would take us downtown from our friend's home in the suburbs, where we were staying. While Glenn Beck had managed to attract fewer than 90,000 tea partiers to his Restoring Honor rally, we joined a crowd of about 250,000 crammed along the National Mall. Although the mood was celebratory and the crowd boisterous, it was nonetheless a remarkably courteous gathering of diverse people attending a political rally for all the right reasons — to support the call for moderation and civility sadly lacking in our political sphere.

And of course there was humour. After being introduced by Stewart, Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens) began singing "Peace Train," only to be interrupted by Colbert ("I'm not getting on some international peace train that probably needs a Eurail pass to get on it . . . Frankly, I believe this train does not exist!"). Instead, Colbert introduced heavy metal singer Ozzy Osbourne, who entered to the crunching sound of the power chords that kicks off his signature song, "Crazy Train." After more mock arguing between Stewart and Colbert, the two eventually settled on the O'Jays, dressed in bright white suits, singing "Love Train."

A man dressed as Waldo surfed the crowd several large blocks west of the Capitol, en route to the stage. People perched on the limbs of trees to see the various performers (who included Sheryl Crow, Mavis Staples, and Tony Bennett). Everyone cheerfully followed instructions to jump at the same time to measure the impact. The signs people carried added a surreal touch: "You have a moustache, but I am pretty sure you are not Hitler"; "Give quiche a chance"; and "I'm not angry, I just want a taco."

The Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear wasn't entirely satirical. Stewart said, in his closing speech, that labelling those with different views "enemies" and accepting propaganda, whether from the left or right, makes people "less safe, not more." He ended saying everyone has to make "reasonable compromises."

Later, driving home from Washington, I asked myself, *How does this apply to Canada?* We like to think that we have a more reasonable and sane political culture than our neighbours to the south, but if you apply the ten-percent equation (Canada has ten percent of the U.S. population and ten percent of the U.S. GDP), it means we have ten percent of America's political dysfunction. In reality, I think it's much higher than that.

Reflecting again on Stewart's remark about "reasonable compromises," I thought, *Isn't that how most of us live our lives?* We all make "reasonable compromises" at our workplaces, among friends, and at home with our spouses and children. So why is it that our elected officials cannot manage to do the same in the arena of national politics?

Like many Canadians, I have lost confidence in the fundamentals of our democratic system, along with the idea of an honest and efficient federal government. I'm frustrated with endless reports of wasted money and ineffective programs. I resent years of federal leaders creating short-term opportunities for consumption instead of long-term opportunities for education and employment, leaving us spectacularly unprepared for an age of restraint and environmental devastation. Sadly, especially for many young people, it's much easier to give up on national politics altogether and settle for mediocrity and low expectations.

Why do I think this way?

- Our national government is not transparent and accountable. We do not receive full and complete information on a timely basis on anything — from the impact of oil sands development on nearby Aboriginal communities to the terrible state of the Chalk River isotope facilities. From the potentially dangerous side effects of drugs or chemicals and the real cost of fighter aircraft to the actual state of public finances. Too many politicians are concerned with partisan advantage and self-interest rather than with the larger public good and the national interest.
- Our national government lacks a coherent national purpose. We do not feel that we are part of a collective Canadian effort to address the effects of the biggest issues of our times, like recessions and climate change and the shameful living conditions endured by so many Aboriginal Canadians. Our national government is more concerned with protecting the interests that support parties during elections, maintaining control of voting blocks with payments to the provinces and territories, and practising the politics of divide and conquer rather than advancing the well-being and aspirations of all Canadians.
- So many Canadians feel their vote doesn't change anything. Election campaigns have become uninspiring and excruciatingly boring. It's as though politicians believe the public can't process any idea more complex than what can be stencilled in five words on a T-shirt (even shorter than a tweet!). Whatever the platform, most governments are

obsessed with maintaining power at the expense of substantive, intelligent debate. Part of the fallout of this is the muzzling of members of Parliament so that they're unable to speak their minds and effectively represent their constituents.

- Question Period (officially known in French as *questions orales*), is dysfunctional. According to the House of Commons *Compendium*, Question Period is intended to “seek information from the Government and to call it to account for its actions.” But today it is an embarrassment, the political counterpart to brawling in hockey. Most Canadians I speak to are fed up with the state of national politics and political discourse; they want a national Parliament in which debate is substantive, factual, and relevant.
- The controversy over the long-gun registry shows how ideology can hijack noble intentions. While there were undeniable management problems with the registry's implementation, a Liberal government responded to the horrific events of the Montreal massacre by taking substantive steps toward reducing gun violence. No Liberal should apologize for that. The registry, however, was abolished by Stephen Harper's Conservative government in 2012. Going forward, we must let our heads, not ideology, guide our decisions. What matters now is evidence about the impact of cancelling the registry and the views of law enforcement officials, who, unlike parliamentarians, are on the front lines.

It's easy to become discouraged, but I am inspired by a simple idea: by working together, we can build one Canada for all Canadians — an equitable, sustainable, and democratic country that is also economically successful. (For more details, look at my Roadmap to One Canada, which outlines the steps we need to take: <http://www.deborahcoyne.ca/policy/a-roadmap-to-one-canada/>.)

Of course, I expect constructive disagreement on many issues. Disagreement adds a healthy dynamic to political debate and allows us to identify those “reasonable compromises” that will allow us to reach consensus and move forward. But in Canada today, there seems to be little appetite for a civil discussion of issues resulting in principled compromises. Take, for example, the debate early in 2012 over proposed online surveillance legislation. As with most bills when they are introduced, legitimate questions were raised (in this case, about whether the bill would result in dangerous invasions of privacy). The Conservative government's public safety minister, Vic Toews, tried to shut down the discussion by accusing critics of the bill of supporting child pornographers. How much more childishly reductive can an elected official be?

I understand the skepticism, and often-outright cynicism, that people feel about national politics. More and more Canadians, especially younger ones, dismiss politics as a boring and outdated struggle between supporters of smaller government, less spending and private-sector solutions and advocates of bigger government, more spending and public intervention. These simplistically big/small, right/left views are seriously out-of-sync with the rhythm of modern times. No wonder national political parties are increasingly viewed as irrelevant, powered by political agendas controlled by a select few.

Yet while Canadians tune out national politics, huge numbers of them are active every single day with civil society groups and organizations that contribute to the well-being of the nation as a whole, especially where it concerns the struggling and disenfranchised. Our ability to connect through the Internet, and social media in particular, has irrevocably changed the foundation of political authority by empowering new voices in ways no one could have imagined even a generation ago. Cyber-powered democracy is becoming the means of making known to our elected representatives our most pressing issues and concerns.

Our national parties are slow to adapt to these new realities, to recognize that individuals, not just the brokers within closed party hierarchies, will soon have the power to set political agendas.

Sadly, the most recent, and dramatic, example of a party losing touch with its constituents and misreading the new era of politics is my party, the Liberal Party of Canada. We became directionless, standing for nothing that resonated with Canadians. Could the evidence have been starker than in the results of the May 2011 federal election? The Liberal Party suffered its worst defeat in history: a third-place finish with only 19 percent of the vote, returning only 34 seats to the House of Commons and just four seats west of Ontario.

Ironically, however, this collapse may facilitate a necessary and overdue adaptation to the age of instant communications and the multiple points of access to the public forum and debate.

The first step is for the Liberal Party to be fully engaged online, interacting creatively with the whole range of civil society groups and individuals. We need to undertake a wholesale rebuilding of a responsive and accountable public space that invites citizens into the decision-making process. Social media tools like Facebook and Twitter are great for mobilizing those prepared to act, but that's not enough. The real challenge is to draw out a compelling narrative that unites Canadians despite our disparate activities and concerns. The Liberal Party has to stand for something clear and meaningful, something that provides our elected representatives with the legitimacy to define what is included and excluded from the political agenda at any given time. In short, what's needed is a platform of clearly articulated goals, based on values that will inspire Canadians to show up at the ballot box when national elections are called.

I've always believed that the Liberal Party best mirrored Canada to all Canadians. Our defeat in 2011 wasn't surprising, however, considering the party had abandoned, for over two decades, the basic vision that had underpinned our success in governing Canada for more than a century.

For years, under recent Liberal governments as well as Conservative ones, Canadians have been treated as mere onlookers to the sport of national politics, anesthetized by the masters of political messaging and spin. The role of our national government has been reduced to managing relations with the provinces in all the critical areas of national life. Too often the lowest common denominator of provincial consensus defines national action on everything from Canada Pension Plan reform to environmental protection, from clean energy to health care.

Today, national action has become all about federal-provincial relations and financial transfers to provinces. When negotiations in unaccountable federal-provincial forums — to which citizens are not invited — break down, our federal government turns to the courts, not the people, to resolve differences. Why? Today's elected officials believe it's too complicated to engage in discussions with the Canadian people; it's so much easier to bypass us completely.

In 1996, pollster Angus Reid wrote, “The tragedy of Canada today is that just when we need a country that's pulling together in common cause, we have one that keeps finding new ways to pull itself apart.” I believe in uniting, not dividing, our huge, sprawling country with an energetic national government that meets the needs and aspirations of all Canadians.

Maybe you're asking yourself, *Who is Deborah Coyne to hold such strong opinions about these matters?* That's understandable because, although I've been involved in the political world for three decades, I have not followed a conventional political career. Still, ever since I was a university student, I've believed that someday I would participate in elected politics at the national level. Never did I guess that my journey would include entering the 2013 race to lead the Liberal Party of Canada *before* being elected a member of Parliament.

I have been repeatedly reminded over the years that political success is a matter of luck and timing more than principles or policies. And I have certainly had more than my fair share of bad luck and bad timing. But I passionately believe that principles and policies should matter; that political power is held in trust on behalf of Canadians; that preserving the dignity of our neighbours, especially the disenfranchised, preserves the dignity of us all; and that a strong and honourable national government is what makes a democracy work.

When I began seriously considering seeking the leadership of the Liberal Party, after the resignation of Michael Ignatieff, it came as no surprise to those who know me best: my close friends and family. My life has been a series of abrupt turns, twisted trajectories, and calculated risks. I've thrived on adventure and unpredictability, but I've always had a purpose. Long ago, I decided that I wanted to contribute to building a better world and that, within reason, we should live each day as if it were our last.

I say “within reason” because my frame of reference changed fundamentally with the arrival of my children, Sarah and Matthew, and my responsibilities as a mother. Like most people, my personal life is intertwined with my professional life, which at one time included a relationship with former prime minister Pierre Trudeau. I am going to tell you about that, as well as the story of my long career, which has evolved within and around our country's political world.

It starts here.

2. Growing Up

I am the second of five siblings. The eldest, Jennifer, was born in 1953. I came along two years later, followed by Barbara, John, and the baby of the family, Ryland.

Our dad, John McCreary Elliott Coyne (known to friends as “Jack”), flew with the Royal Canadian Air Force and was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war, he studied law at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. He became an authority on administrative law and international trade, which, years later, led to his being named to the Canadian roster of panelists for dispute settlement procedures under Chapter 19 of the Canada–U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

But what I most remember about him from my childhood, other than that he taught me about honesty and fairness, is that he practised law at his office and, when he came home at night, taught history to his children. He spoke of historical events with enthusiasm and authority, as though he were channelling eyewitnesses from earlier centuries.

He often told us about conversations he’d had with his grandfather, James Henry Coyne, a lawyer and historian who served with the St. Thomas Rifles in campaigns during the Fenian raids of 1866 and was alive for Confederation and the American Civil War. And he passed along James Henry’s recollections of stories told by *his* father, William Coyne, who had lived through the French and American revolutions, the death of Napoleon, and the 1837 rebellions in Canada.

One thing that surprised me was obtaining the long-form copy of my birth certificate. I discovered that my father had entered my racial origin as Manx. He explained that since “racial origin” was such a difficult concept at the best of times, he decided to identify the true ancestry of the Coyne clan from the Isle of Man. Located in the Irish Sea between Great Britain and Ireland, the Isle of Man is a British crown dependency, unique for having maintained its independence from Britain and its own direct link to the British monarchy. (It is perhaps better known to children everywhere as the Island of Sodor, home of Thomas the Tank Engine.)

My father always believed in a strong national government. In fact, my father’s side of the family included many articulate proponents of a central government that protected the interests of Canadians. In 1937, for example, my grandfather, James Bowes Coyne, a lawyer and judge in Manitoba, promoted an early version of a Canadian Bill of Rights to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations.

The Ottawa of the 1960s was very much a small town. We lived in a quiet, comfortable area of Rockcliffe Park that was not far from Parliament Hill and the residences of many diplomats and politicians. In those days, kids and pets played freely in the streets, in sharp contrast to the world of my children, decades later. Still, our childhood was shaped by the matriarch of our home.

My mother, Margery Joan Daniels, grew up in Montreal, the much younger child of my gruff, maternal grandmother, who was widowed when my mother was a young girl. My mother

made sure her own children rigorously followed accepted rules of behaviour, enforcing strict schedules for everything from piano lessons to chores to bedtimes. Even our toothbrushes were colour-coded. (When I grew into an increasingly independent and truculent teenager, my mother despaired of me becoming a “bluestocking,” a derogatory nineteenth-century term for a properly educated, intellectual young woman.)

I attended the local elementary school and then Elmwood School for Girls from grades six through twelve. Learning came easily to me, and I loved taking on challenges like studying Russian, which I started in grade eight. I was a national finalist in the 1969 science fair in Regina, with a project that involved micro-organisms in industrial processes, an area known today as involving “genetically modified foods.” (I drove my family crazy starting fires in our basement with my Bunsen burner and growing what my mother considered to be mould in test tubes that I kept in the fridge.)

My mother ruled life during the school year, from September to June. But during the summers, at our cottage on Meech Lake in the Gatineau Hills north of Ottawa, my father’s informal and adventurous attitude prevailed. My earliest, happiest memories are of being the tomboy who swam, sailed, and generally explored in, on, and around the lake, collecting toads, frogs, and snakes. Back then, politics was as distant from me as was the later transformation of the lake’s name into a chapter in Canadian constitutional history, one in which I would end up playing a central role.

The cottage had no access by road, no electricity and, for many years, no phone. A gas pump had to be started manually every day to bring lake water to a tank for our daily use. We filled bottles of drinking water at a spring across the lake, half an hour’s boat ride away, and relied on propane gas for the stove and a few lights. Things were very compact, with the three girls bunking in one room and the two boys in another.

My summers were filled with scything grass, clearing slash piles, burning trash, and washing clothes by hand (pinching my fingers in the old clothes ringer in the process). I sailed and waterskied, dove off cliffs, went long-distance swimming, and loved the annual regatta held on the lake. I went rock climbing, explored in the woods, and went on hikes that ended with picnics at the abandoned Carbide Wilson Mill (even after a nudist colony moved in). I was the kind of girl more likely to be found up a tree than doing what my mother expected of a “proper young lady.”

My parents wanted their children to have a sense of the wider world around them. Along with visits to our mother’s family in Montreal, we crossed Canada by train during the 1967 centennial year, drove east to the Maritimes, and enjoyed fall road trips through the Appalachian Mountains in the U.S.

Gradually I began to pay more attention to U.S. and global politics. Being Canadian at that time was exciting, even though I was disappointed to discover that, despite Canada’s huge geography, we were not a superpower (just ten percent of the U.S.). Still, our national government’s leaders seemed to be both outward- and forward-looking, and played an increasingly influential role in international peace and security and in mitigating third-world poverty. Meanwhile, at home, Canada seemed to have it together. We had a social safety net

— health care, unemployment insurance, and pensions — that worked. With most of my parents' friends focused on federal politics, it's not surprising that I was neither very aware of, nor especially interested in, provincial politics. (My father was elected for one term as a local councillor. Over the years, I came to appreciate those who serve at the municipal level, dealing with issues that affect the quality of one's life on a day-to-day basis.)

A couple of times I found myself unexpectedly using my Russian. In 1972, my parents and I saw the great ballet star Rudolf Nureyev performing in *Sleeping Beauty* at the National Arts Centre. I was introduced to him at an after-party and was able to exchange a few words with him in his language. A few months later, a young Russian tennis player was billeted with our family so that he could attend an international tournament. He was always accompanied by his chaperone, a KGB agent. I talked to the KGB chaperone quite a bit, quizzing the poor fellow about how he could bear to live in such a controlling and restrictive society. He solemnly replied that when you love your country you don't abandon it, even if you don't agree with its leadership and its rules. He thought it was each citizen's responsibility to try to improve society for future generations. These conversations inspired me to understand the global forces shaping the world.

3. Political Awakening

In the 1960s and '70s, change seemed embedded in Canada's DNA. The country opened itself to immigration from every corner of the globe, beginning the long-term process of turning Canada into a crossroads of the world. At my job as a bank teller each summer, I no longer filled in passbooks by hand; computers were doing it for me, foreshadowing the age of instant communications and information technology that was just around the corner.

In 1968, Pierre Trudeau, then a Liberal justice minister, oversaw landmark amendments to the Canadian Criminal Code on abortion, homosexuality, and divorce. (He also famously said "There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation," a sentiment that perfectly expressed the tolerance and broadmindedness of the era.) After a successful bid for the leadership of the Liberal Party in 1968, he succeeded Lester Pearson as prime minister. Calling an election for June, the charismatic, youthful, and unmarried Trudeau inspired a wave of "Trudeaumania" — mobs of young people, including screaming girls, not dissimilar to the Beatlemania of a few years earlier. I was not among them, never one to follow the pack, and was, in fact, far more aware of Robert Kennedy and the civil rights movement in the U.S. than I was of Canadian politics.

What followed just two years later was the shock of the 1970 October Crisis. One of my classmates and closest friends, Mimi Stanfield, and I were horrified that a man had been killed in Quebec. Soldiers and tanks were all over Ottawa. Because she was the daughter of the opposition leader, Robert Stanfield, Mimi had armed guards around her house for a while. After that, a steady rise in Quebec separatism inspired a period of vigorous and creative debate over changes to an outdated federalist structure established for an earlier century.

When I started my undergrad at Queen's University in 1972, I planned to pursue medicine but ended up switching into economics and history, growing more and more fascinated by the

political economy. From many conversations with my father and his friends in Ottawa, I had come to believe that politics can make a difference in people's lives, that it's all about governing for the common good, not the interests or ideology of one party or section of society.

I have never considered myself particularly ideological. My first vote in a national election was in Kingston and went to the Honourable Flora MacDonald of what was then known as the Progressive Conservative Party. My philosophical home was always going to be the Liberal Party, even then. But to be truthful, in my first year at university, like so many other students, I was far more interested in the riveting Canada-USSR hockey series and hanging out with engineers than I was in politics.

I decided to go to law school, I admit, because I wasn't sure what else to do. I didn't want to teach history or economics, but I liked learning and knew a law degree could be useful in many fields. While attending Osgoode Hall from 1976 to 1979, I realized that far from being boring, law is all about how society works as well as an instrument with which to shape society, which tied into my idealistic goal of making the world a better place. I especially benefited from the guidance of two mentors: Harry Arthurs, one of Canada's leading labour-law specialists; and Walter Tarnopolsky, a renowned human rights and constitutional expert. Other inspiring professors included Neil Brooks, a tax lawyer who passionately believed that corporations and a nation's wealthiest people should pay their fair share of taxes, and Louise Arbour, who later became chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, a justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and the UN high commissioner for human rights.

With the election of René Lévesque's Parti Québécois in 1976, political debate in Canada heated up even more. Eager to improve my French and understand more about the rise of separatism, I decided to spend two summers in Quebec, one at the University of Sherbrooke Law School and the other in Quebec City.

While at Osgoode, I organized regular public debates with my friend Paul Torrie, who later became an authority on alternative dispute resolution. Whenever possible, we would bring in someone representing separatism and pair them with a federalist (speakers included Federal Justice Minister Marc Lalonde and Rodrigue Biron, leader of the Union Nationale in Quebec). In 1979, my final year at law school, Paul called upon his father-in-law, Norm MacLeod, president of the Liberal Party of Canada, to convince Pierre Trudeau to attend one of our debates. Since Pierre was campaigning in Toronto anyway, he agreed. (This was the election that would end with his loss to Joe Clark's Progressive Conservatives and his brief resignation as leader.) After the debate, I presented him with hockey jerseys from the Osgoode Owls hockey team for each of his three sons as well as one for him. (It seemed like a nice gesture at the time, but I was bemused by the superficial media reports that noted that I had given jerseys only to Pierre and his sons, but not to his wife, Margaret.)

(A footnote: I had crossed paths with both Pierre and Margaret several times growing up. My parents were good friends with Margaret's parents. Jimmy Sinclair, a long-time Liberal MP from Vancouver, and his wife, Kathleen, were our neighbours when they lived in Ottawa in the early 1960s. Margaret occasionally stayed with us later while she was dating Pierre. She

also stood in for her mother, who was my sister's godmother, at my sister's confirmation. After she and Pierre married, they visited our cottage at Meech Lake one summer day and I took Pierre water-skiing behind our motorboat. We also crossed paths on another occasion, when Pierre and Margaret stopped to say hello to me when I was cycling the 40 kilometres from Ottawa to our cottage and they were driving by in Pierre's famous 1957 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster en route to Harrington Lake.)

I never felt as though I worked that hard at Osgoode, but clearly law was the right scholarly pursuit for me. I was the gold medalist and won several prizes and a substantial scholarship. I then began articling at Blake, Cassels, a leading Toronto-based firm. In 1980, I was a lowly clerk during the intense bailout of Chrysler Canada, which opened my eyes to the integration of the Canadian and U.S. auto markets. During my corporate rotation, I took the Canadian Securities Course to learn about the esoteric world of stocks and bonds. (I think I did as well as I did because we were in the midst of a recession at the time, and for one exercise I invested aggressively in supermarket chains, convinced that people had to eat, regardless of the economic conditions.)

When I was offered a job at Blake, Cassels, I made sure that my supervisors knew in advance that I planned to use my scholarship money to attend Oxford University and study international relations. The promise of a job, I knew, still awaited me when I returned.

In the summer of 1980, as I prepared to leave Canada for England, my only regret was that I would be missing an exciting period of constitutional debate following Quebec's first referendum a couple of months earlier. (The proposal to pursue a path toward sovereignty was defeated by a 59 percent to 40 percent margin.) To keep up-to-date with constitutional developments, I decided to write a letter to the Prime Minister's Office, requesting that I be put on a mailing list so that I'd receive in England all the documents produced by the government. (For a constitutional junkie like me, these would end up as my bedside reading at Oxford.) To my surprise, Pierre called me at my family home in Ottawa one day, telling me that he remembered the debate I'd co-hosted at Osgoode Hall and my keen interest in constitutional issues. He asked me if I wanted to attend the opening ceremonies of the Federal-Provincial Conference of First Ministers on the Constitution, scheduled for early September 1980, which kicked off the negotiations that, we know today, led to the patriation of the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

When I arrived at the Ottawa Convention Centre, an assistant brought me to a private office, where Pierre was in a briefing with two of his senior advisors — Michael Pitfield, clerk of the Privy Council, and Michael Kirby, secretary to the Canadian Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations as well as deputy clerk of the Privy Council. I suppose I was brought to him because Pierre had approved my name on the guest list. He greeted me and then waved at me to take a seat and stay. I felt a bit awkward, and I'm sure that they were all being careful not to say anything highly confidential. Later, I sat in some public seats behind the first ministers. At some point, during a break, I left. I wasn't sure I got much out of it, other than the feeling that I'd been watching a historically significant event.

If today it seems extraordinary that Pierre would have done that, it really wasn't. He, like most politicians, noticed when a young person had a particular interest in constitutional affairs and

government and just wanted to give a family friend's daughter an experience he thought she'd appreciate.

I arrived in England in October 1980, shortly after the Margaret Thatcher era had truly begun. As the leader of the Conservative Party for five years, she had been in opposition until winning the 1979 general election. She quickly introduced the usual menu of conservative political and economic initiatives: reducing the size of government, tax cuts, deregulation, privatizing state-owned companies, and reducing the power of labour unions. Her policies were often compared to Reaganomics in the U.S., and she soon earned her own term: "Thatcherism."

My timing for a stay in the United Kingdom was bad. Mrs. Thatcher's decision to deny Commonwealth students access to lower national tuition rates meant that my entire scholarship from Osgoode would pay for only one year of my program. I would have to come up with my own financing for the second year. (Fortunately, I was able to win a Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship that covered the rest of my tuition.) At Oxford, I joined a small group promoting a liberal alternative to the Conservatives under David Owen, the former Labour Party's foreign secretary, who was in the process of forming what would become the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Meanwhile, I was following the Canadian constitutional debate from afar and occasionally writing passionate letters to the editors of British newspapers. It stunned me to realize how many people in Britain still held a colonial view of Canada, with the impression that Canada was Britain's responsibility. (I considered it my responsibility as a visiting Canadian to provide an alternative point of view.) By patriating the Constitution, I knew that Canada would finally be free of its colonial status and would have its own Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

My time at Oxford, from 1980 to 1982, wasn't all about politics, though. Growing up in Ottawa with a hockey-enthusiast father who rarely missed a game on television (and occasionally took me to see the Montreal Canadiens play at the Forum), I played shinny. After trying my hand rather unsuccessfully at cricket, I established the first Women's Ice Hockey Club, which led to my participating in the creation of a new women's ice hockey league in England. I captained the Oxford team in its first year, and while we sadly lost the inaugural game against our rivals in Cambridge, I scored the only goal and qualified for my Oxford half-blue award for the game. And I'm happy to say that, three decades later, both the women's team and the British women's ice hockey league are still going strong. Long gone are the days of using equipment borrowed from the men and 2 a.m. practices at rinks as far away as Bristol. Today, Oxford has its own ice rink.

Aside from sports, my other extracurricular passion has always been travel. Whenever I had the chance, I would visit different parts of the world. While a student at Oxford, I mastered the art of low-budget travel using Lonely Planet guidebooks. (At that time, the Lonely Planet books had been around for about a decade.) I liked packing light, with only a vague itinerary, thriving on the excitement of exploring the world and experiencing other cultures.

One memorable trip was to Russia in June 1982, with an organized group (the only way tourists could enter Russia under then president Leonid Brezhnev). Upon my arrival, I came to the attention of the KGB because I had with me a copy of *The Economist*. It was confiscated and resulted in my baggage being extensively searched before I was permitted to enter the country.

Undeterred by the experience and determined to see the real Russia and use the Russian I had studied in high school and university, whenever I could I explored both Leningrad and Moscow on my own, chatting with ordinary Russians in the subway, on the streets, and in cafés, much to the consternation of the KGB guide assigned to our group. Dan Woolf, a fellow student with whom I was sharing a room in order to save money, had to endure the guide yelling at him, “Where’s your wife? Where’s your wife?” Dan, who is today principal and vice chancellor of Queen’s University, put up with my shenanigans patiently and with good humour. We would have whispered conversations in our room at night, so convinced were we that the KGB had installed listening devices. At one point, a stranger in the hotel asked me to take back to England a letter addressed to the editor of a socialist newspaper in London. When I was not searched before boarding our plane back to England, Dan and I were convinced that the stranger had been an agent of the KGB and that perhaps we were unwittingly being used as couriers, or perhaps it was something that involved double agents, like in a John le Carré or Ian Fleming novel. (When I returned to England, I decided not to mail the letter.)

By 1981, my international relations studies at Oxford had inspired my interest in what was known as North-South relations and issues of anti-colonialism. I had begun a thesis on North-South international financial and monetary relations when I heard that representatives from the developed (North) and developing (South) nations would be taking part in the Cancun Summit on International Cooperation and Development, to be held at the Mexican holiday resort town of Cancun. The summit would address the big development issues of the day — food, energy, technology, and structural reforms to global institutions — hoping to pave the way for better negotiations in the future. The co-chairmen were Mexico’s president, Jose Lopez Portillo, and Canada’s prime minister, Pierre Trudeau.

Well, I thought, if Pierre would invite me to observe a first ministers conference, maybe he would help me attend the North-South Summit. First, I wrote him a handwritten letter, addressed to the PMO, asking him if there was a way I could attend the summit because it tied into my thesis. When I followed up with a phone call, a helpful assistant in the PMO agreed to put me on a list of accredited Canadian journalists who would be making the trip, as long as I could pay my own way, which meant finding a “sponsor.” Well, that meant finding a media outlet that would let me, a non-journalist, cover the summit for it. Through a friend who lived in Northern Ontario, I got in touch with Wayne Green, editor of the *Kapuskasing Northern Times*, who turned out to be more than happy to pick up a story from me. Then I received travel money from Oxford because the trip related to my thesis. And that’s how I ended up staying in a hotel with the Canadian media contingent in Cancun, billeted with an employee of the Canadian Embassy and surviving on my tiny budget by taking advantage of the hotel’s all-you-can-eat breakfast and stashing a day’s supply of fruit and buns in my bag.

Every day I walked down the beach to attend the White House briefing sessions given by U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig. For most of the summit, I went to briefings and spent time

with the late Evan Luard (a former Labour MP and minister in the British Foreign Office, who was representing Oxfam), and other like-minded people. On one curious occasion, I ended up going water-skiing with the young aides to Ferdinand Marcos, long-time president of the Philippines, whose administration was best known for massive corruption, political repression, and human rights violations.

The dynamics of the summit were fascinating and, although little of real substance was achieved, it merited a brief reference in my thesis, justifying Oxford's paying for my airfare. My thesis was eventually published by the Canadian-based North-South Institute as a small book entitled, *Monetary and Financial Reform: The North-South Controversy*.

Russia and Mexico weren't the only places I was fortunate to visit while at Oxford. As I was winding down my studies in the summer of 1982, I embarked on a trip to Turkey, Israel, and Egypt at a time when the hostilities between Israel and Lebanon were high. While crossing overland on one of the first buses permitted between Tel-Aviv and Cairo, a bomb threat meant we had to take an extremely circuitous route around the Suez Canal and be dropped off in an obscure suburb on the outskirts of Cairo rather than enter the city itself.

I also remember being trapped on a train for more than 12 hours, in an un-air-conditioned car with windows that didn't open, en route down the Nile during Ramadan. My travelling companion, a fellow student, and I tried to convince the men in the car to stop smoking by noisily resorting to non-stop singing of songs from the soundtrack of *The Sound of Music*. Finally, one of the men smashed open a window so air would circulate and agreed to smoke only by the open window if we would stop singing.

I could have stayed for another year at Oxford to complete a Doctor of Philosophy (in Europe, the term traditionally referred to a doctorate in any field other than theology, law, or medicine), but I was anxious to return to Canada and move forward in some kind of career. More than anything, I felt drawn to the complex and exciting events going on in Canadian politics. While I was away, the *Canada Act 1982* had been approved by the UK and Canada and, on April 17, 1982, Queen Elizabeth II had come to Canada to proclaim the new *Constitution Act* on Parliament Hill. It included the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. So much change. Canada was home and where, I thought, I could make some significant contributions. I just wasn't sure exactly what those contributions would be.

4. Path to Political Engagement

When I returned to Canada in the late summer of 1982, Blake, Cassels had, as promised, held a job for me. They agreed to finance my bar admission course (which would run until February 1983) if I started working for the firm the following spring. I accepted the offer, but once I began my studies, I discovered that my interest in law had evaporated during my time away. I found the bar admission course excruciatingly boring, and for the first time in my academic life, I settled for mediocre exam results.

With the exams behind me, I spent a few weeks in Paris, billeted with a lovely French family while taking another French course and immersing myself in French politics, before returning

to Toronto to start a litigation practice with Blake, Cassels. At that time, the firm was benefiting from a flood of wrongful dismissal suits in the wake of the recession of the early '80s.

Settling back into life in Canada after two years in England, I began to feel that my country was losing its sense of direction and momentum. This had a lot to do with a belated understanding on the part of politicians that our national debt was unsustainable, as well as with increasing federal-provincial tensions, especially with respect to energy and natural resources. The federal government seemed frequently adrift, struggling to come to grips with the forces buffeting the country.

Early in 1983, I attended my first Liberal Party event, accompanied by my old Osgoode friend, Paul Torrie, and his friend, Alf Apps (who later became president of the Liberal Party of Canada when Michael Ignatieff became leader.) Alf had been involved in launching the reform movement within the Liberal Party at its national biennial convention the year before and, that night, a committee was being struck. On a whim, I decided to put my name forward and gave a two-minute speech. Later, I learned that I'd been elected, along with Alf, as one of two Ontario representatives on the Liberal Party Reform Committee.

Reformers believed that the Liberal Party's base had become disillusioned, largely ignored because too much power was concentrated in the hands of "backroom boys," most notably the legendary Keith Davey. Liberal Party president Iona Campagnolo also knew there were problems. She wanted to know why the grassroots felt so alienated. How could things be changed?

Over the next couple of years, I worked in my spare time with, among others, dedicated and knowledgeable Liberals such as Newfoundland's Ed Roberts and BC's Gordon Gibson, while participating in cross-country discussions that eventually led to a series of recommended draft amendments to the party's constitution in our final report three years later. One key recommendation was to create a council of riding presidents, which was finally implemented 20 years later, just in time to be made obsolete by the age of the Internet and the World Wide Web. The Liberal Party's weaknesses had been entrenched long before that and it would take more than our committee to shake things up.

Despite Pierre's having led the Liberals to another majority in 1980, early 1984 opinion polls suggested that the Liberal Party would be defeated if he remained its leader. In late February, after his famous "long walk in the snow," he announced that he would retire on June 30, 1984. When the leadership race was called, Blake, Cassels allowed me to take a leave of absence to join John Turner's campaign team. In my mind, though, I knew I was using the opportunity as a bridge to exit the predictable world of a law and to move into the unpredictable but exhilarating world of politics and public policy. It reflected what I know to be one of my character traits: following my heart while disregarding what would be financially far more remunerative, and what might be considered a more sensible and safe course of action.

As the Ontario policy chair for the Turner leadership campaign, I soon discovered how marginalized policy ideas were from the political process. I organized regular open policy meetings around what I thought were topical issues, which were attended by guests like

business tycoon Frank Stronach (then promoting a new industrial strategy), and Michael Marzolini, a pollster and strategist with fresh ideas who ran Insight Canada Research (later to be rebranded as Pollara). I prepared sets of what I believed were novel policy proposals, each coordinated to the subjects of the all-candidate debates. I felt envious of the campaign being run by another leadership hopeful, Donald Johnston, because he had his team issuing a stream of innovative policy statements.

As a relatively lowly member of what I saw as a dysfunctional Turner team, I felt that my efforts to advance substantial policy ideas were not taken seriously. I even wrote a letter to Turner outlining areas I thought were being ignored and dropped it off at his house.

Looking back, I now know that there were some tensions developing. The great John de B. Payne, a long-time senior advisor to the Liberals who, for three decades, had known every cabinet minister from the prime minister down, had been the *éminence grise* behind Turner. I had come to his attention and one evening, he and his wife, Wilissa, took me out to dinner. John, who had my letter to Turner with him, said he thought the ideas were good and didn't understand why they weren't being taken seriously. I felt better hearing that. When Turner easily defeated his closest rival, Jean Chrétien, at the June 16, 1984, Liberal leadership convention and was sworn in as prime minister two weeks later, John arranged for me to be offered a position in Turner's PMO, which I accepted.

I most certainly did not anticipate that, only ten days later, in the costliest gamble of his career, Turner would ask Governor General Jeanne Sauvé to dissolve Parliament and call an election for September.

As it turned out, the Turner PMO was no less dysfunctional than the leadership team had been. The expectations for Turner's leadership were unrealistically high. A corporate lawyer and one-time golden boy of the Liberal Party, he had served in various posts under Prime Minister Lester Pearson, including a high-profile period as minister of consumer and corporate affairs. He ran for the leadership in 1968 but lost to Pierre. In the Trudeau government, Turner was first minister of justice and later minister of finance, from 1972 to 1975, when he grappled with the big, global financial issues of the time: skyrocketing oil prices, slow economic growth, rising inflation, and bigger and bigger deficits. Citing personality conflicts with Pierre, he quit in 1975 and resumed his law practice, returning for the '84 leadership convention. Seen by many in the party as a saviour (a weakness the Liberal Party suffers from to this day), he soon seemed more like a liability.

It was British Prime Minister Harold Wilson who is credited with saying, "A week is a long time in politics." Which would suggest that nine years is an eternity. Turner, once considered a youthful figure comparable to John F. Kennedy, appeared out-of-touch, his political instincts no longer sharp. He failed to heal rifts within the party following the leadership campaign and, despite having called a snap election, hadn't prepared a coherent platform. Among his first actions was to make 17 patronage appointments, even though the Canadian public had been outraged by patronage appointments made by Pierre when he retired. At one point he referred to "make-work programs," a patronizing phrase from the '70s that had been replaced by the term "job-creation programs." He appeared incompetent when he accused the new Progressive Conservative leader, Brian Mulroney, of planning to fire 600,000 civil servants when the

federal government only employed a total of 500,000. Worse, he was seen patting the bottom of Liberal Party president Iona Campagnolo, a sharp contrast with Pierre's courtly style, and he found himself labeled sexist. (To her credit, Iona, caught off-guard, nonetheless was quick-witted enough to pat Turner's bum right back.)

I arrived for my new job as a lowly policy advisor in the PMO to find that the premature election call meant that there was no time to organize a smoothly running operation. Turner loyalists were in disarray. The party had virtually no support in the west and no plan to turn that around. Meanwhile, there was discontent in the Liberal stronghold of Quebec over the patriation of the Constitution. Turner's campaign manager was fired; Keith Davey returned. The Liberals once again relied on a saviour.

Turner held his own during the first of the televised debates, "Encounter '84," but many believe that the knockout blow came in the second debate, when he told Mulroney that he had "no option" but to approve the patronage appointments Pierre had left him during the transition. Pointing a finger at Turner, Mulroney forcefully pounced. "You had an option, sir," Mulroney said. "You could have said, 'I'm not going to do it, this is wrong for Canada, and I'm not going to ask Canadians to pay the price' . . ." A clearly rattled Turner simply repeated, "I had no option."

On September 4, just 79 days after taking office as prime minister, Turner suffered the worst defeat by a governing party since Progressive Conservative Arthur Meighen lost to Mackenzie King's Liberals in 1921. And, three months after quitting Blake, Cassels, I found myself out of work.

5. Citizen Activist

Rather than return to practising law, I chose to seek opportunities to work in public policy in some way. I was attracted to the intellectual challenges, multidisciplinary approach, and contribution it would allow me to make to public service and democratic governance. Two months after leaving the PMO, in November 1984, I found a job with the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI).

The BCNI was an unlikely home for me. Rebranded in 2001 as the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, it has always been a non-profit organization dedicated to influencing public policy to further the interests of Canadian business. Its president and CEO, Thomas d'Aquino, had worked for three years as a special assistant in the Trudeau PMO before shifting into the private sector. The BCNI had a conservative reputation but always made an effort to be non-partisan. Although I know my work was valued and I got along with everyone, I was the token Liberal on staff.

Still, for about a year I had an interesting time organizing task forces made up of key business leaders and formulating position papers based on a consensus of their views, mainly on social policy reform and competition policy. I was also able to see, at close range, how the lobbying process worked. I got along with everyone there, even if it was clear that they assigned me less controversial files, given my Liberal Party association. In any event, the process was

collaborative. I remember that a more conservative-minded academic, Tom Courchene, worked on one of my draft BCNI position papers on social policy, but that was acceptable, just the way things were done there. At the time, the free trade issue was heating up, and the BCNI was an enthusiastic proponent. Nonetheless, I was impressed by how some of the CEOs who made up its membership were consistently open-minded and progressive across other issues, such as Cedric Ritchie of the Bank of Nova Scotia, who was in charge of the competition file.

In my “spare time” at the BCNI, I wrote about new policy directions for the greatly weakened Liberal Party and circulated the documents among some of the members of the Grindstone Group. Founded by reform-minded Liberals worried about the party’s direction, Grindstone was named after the resort south of Ottawa where the group met. A number of them would become key players in Paul Martin’s future leadership campaign. My big themes were revisiting the principle of universality in favour of some sort of guaranteed annual income and achieving greater equity by helping lower-income Canadians more effectively.

One book that had inspired me that year was Michael Ignatieff’s prescient and thought-provoking *The Needs of Strangers*, in which he argued that a welfare state tries to satisfy a range of basic needs (food, shelter, education, health care) but at the expense of human links between people. In my 1993 book, *Seven Fateful Challenges for Canada*, I summarized Michael’s theme when I wrote:

It seems that somehow, in constructing our huge welfare bureaucracies and a hodgepodge of tax breaks, we have lost our sense of direction and have become isolated from those we intended to help. We have become a “society of strangers” where money is transferred from the pockets of the affluent to the underprivileged via the impersonal intermediation of the state.

Later in 1986, I wrote to Michael and sent him one of the papers I’d written on social policy issues. On March 13, he replied,

. . . I was most impressed by the comprehensiveness, the synoptic ambitions of your thinking on these issues. I do think there is political appeal, especially [for] Liberals, in tying welfare and tax reform together around a GAI [Guaranteed Annual Income] — I think its fairness and its efficiency should appeal to voters. The trouble is, of course, that politics is a game of timing — and I wonder whether Canadians are in the same mood of liberal experimentation which gripped them in the 1960s, and which gave us Medicare, etc. . . .

I fear the Canadian debate mirrors the world debate, and if Canadians are searching for a macroeconomics in which to ground social policy, so I fear is everyone else who has had enough of Mr. Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher.

Such discussions and sharing of ideas were very different from the kind of discussions I had around the offices of the BCNI.

To further satisfy my personal interests, around that time I began writing articles for *De Novo*, a short-lived magazine started by Blair Williams, a political-science professor at Concordia University and long-time Liberal. Blair had been the national director of the federal Liberal Party from 1972 to 1975 and a founder of The Grindstone Group. In March 1985, while on BCNI business in New York, I interviewed Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the American historian and social critic. A passionate liberal, Schlesinger had coined the term “imperial presidency,” in reference to Richard Nixon’s administration. We talked about how he was surviving in Reagan-era America and about his latest book, *The Cycles of American History*, in which he wrote about the “politics of public purpose.”

Schlesinger enthusiastically recommended that I talk to his friend, John Kenneth Galbraith, a fellow Canadian. He put us in touch, and our meeting ended up taking place that summer at Galbraith’s farm in Vermont. During our conversation, we discovered that he knew my uncle, James Coyne. James was the second governor of the Bank of Canada from 1955 to 1961. He famously clashed with the government of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker over fiscal policies, resigning when, in a widely condemned breach of the independence of the Bank of Canada, Diefenbaker announced that he intended to fire my non-compliant uncle. I remained in touch with both Schlesinger and Galbraith, finding their progressive worldviews and philosophies of government very much in sync with mine. (I spent a lovely evening with Galbraith and his wife, Catherine, in Boston a year later when I was taking some teacher training at Harvard Law School before starting to work as an associate professor at the University of Toronto’s Law School.)

In June 1985, *The Toronto Star* published my manifesto for reviving the Liberal Party, and followed up with a short profile on the new generation of young Liberals. But apparently I had crossed a line when it came to working at the BCNI. Thomas d’Aquino determined that my activities were partisan and inconsistent with my continuing employment. In the fall, I offered my resignation and, once again, entered a void where I had no immediate prospects of employment in what had become an even more partisan Ottawa under the influence of the Mulroney Conservatives.

I had, by that time, decided I wanted to run as a Liberal and began the process of looking for an available riding. Ottawa-Vanier was a natural choice since it was the area in which I had grown up. But a popular incumbent was ensconced there, and I could see no sign that he would be stepping down. Turner had appointed Paul Martin to find new candidates, and I spoke with Martin a few times. He expressed concern that young candidates like me would push out older candidates, but aside from that, my most vivid impression of him was of a man beginning his own carefully calibrated ascent to power within the party.

I was invited a few times to meetings of the so-called Faulkner Group, organized by former Trudeau cabinet minister Hugh Faulkner and consisting, it seemed, almost exclusively of men who formed Paul Martin’s inner circle. I found Martin engaging enough, but was never clear about his philosophy or purpose for entering national politics, other than a vague ambition to do something “good” on a national scale and leverage his significant business network. I stopped attending the gatherings a couple of years later, when the Meech Lake accord, which Martin enthusiastically supported and I equally enthusiastically opposed, began to unpredictably dominate the political scene.

Not seeing opportunities in Ottawa, I looked for the first time at provincial politics. Ontario's Liberal-NDP coalition, in which Liberal leader David Peterson became premier in exchange for implementing a number of NDP leader Bob Rae's legislative initiatives, was a model of cooperation that lasted for two years. It seemed like a situation where things could be accomplished. In October 1985, after consulting with a number of my contacts, I found a position as a policy analyst with the Ontario government's Secretariat for Disabled Persons.

Once I'd moved back to Toronto, I became active in the Beaches riding, which was at the time held by an NDP MP. While I lacked the local roots I would have had in Ottawa-Vanier, I had developed a modest reputation within Liberal circles as an activist and party loyalist. It wasn't considered a particularly winnable riding, although it had more potential than if it had been a Conservative stronghold. I remember a couple of awkward canvassing sessions during which I was accompanied by a far more experienced party member and thinking, *How on earth could we have much impact on voters at such an early stage in the Conservative majority and at a time when the Turner-led Liberals were in disarray?*

Meanwhile I had entered a period of job-hopping. In January 1986, just four months after joining the Secretariat for Disabled Persons, I left to take on a truly challenging five-month stint as executive director of the Ontario Task Force on Insurance, at a time when insurance rates were rising astronomically and the entire industry was in crisis. I worked closely with the chair, the late economist and former York University president, Dr. David Slater. We had a lot to do in a very short time. The pace was exhausting, and often I seemed to live at our office, which, fortunately, was just a few blocks from my apartment. At one point, we went on a fact-finding mission to Quebec to learn about that province's system of no-fault auto insurance and how the regulatory body, la Régie de l'assurance automobile, operated. Dr. Slater and I met with, among others, Jacques Parizeau who, as Parti Québécois finance minister, had introduced the public system (and who would, less than a decade later, become the premier of Quebec). In the end, our team came up with sensible proposals that allowed the Ontario government to intervene in carefully defined instances of public interest.

With the end of my Task Force contract approaching, the outgoing dean of the U of T's Faculty of Law, Frank Iacobucci, a future Supreme Court judge, and Rob Prichard, his successor, approached me about teaching. I enthusiastically accepted and found myself with a timely transition to a new job. I was assigned to teach basic constitutional law and created innovative courses on social policy and international finance. I viewed law as an instrument of social change, not simply the black-letter law of torts and contracts, and I thoroughly enjoyed teaching students.

In 1986, I began to write regular articles and essays in the magazine *Policy Options*, which had begun publishing in 1980 and was already established as the country's most important journal covering matters of public policy. I explored what were then new concepts such as "social economy" as well as progressive viewpoints on taxation, corporate concentration, and similar issues. For a short time I was appointed to the advisory board of the magazine; however, as I would soon discover, the fact that I was more interested in writing about many diverse issues in a readable style without footnotes didn't enhance my academic career.

One issue had been simmering ever since the patriation of the Constitution and would come to a rolling boil by the late '80s. It involved Quebec. The agreement that created the *Constitution Act of 1982*, which included the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, passed into law even though, not unexpectedly, the Quebec premier at that time, René Lévesque, an ardent separatist, opposed it. Ever since 1982, a myth has been perpetuated: nationalists insist that Quebec was excluded from the Constitution and must be brought on board. This is not true. As a legal matter, unanimous provincial government approval was not required for the patriation to take effect. In fact, a majority of Quebecers supported the 1982 constitutional package, which included the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; 72 of 75 Quebec MPs voted in favour of it. And Quebecers have never hesitated to rely on the Constitution and the Charter in the courts and elsewhere.

The proposal that Quebec's new Liberal premier, Robert Bourassa, tabled for Quebec consisted of five basic demands:

- Recognition of Quebec as a distinct society
- A right of veto over constitutional change
- A role for Quebec in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court of Canada
- Increased powers over immigration
- A limitation on federal spending powers

In April 1987, the Meech Lake accord — so named because Mulroney and the provincial premiers met at Wilson House, a conference centre on Meech Lake in the Gatineau Hills — was announced. I had been aware of a first ministers conference but hadn't expected it to produce anything earth-shattering. Essentially, the prime minister conceded each of Quebec's demands for more powers and, wherever possible, extended the concessions to all the provinces to ensure their support, undermining the charter in the process.

At the time, I was writing an article entitled "Canada in 2000" (13 years qualified as the "distant future") in which I discussed developments that clearly depended on strong federal leadership, such as a comprehensive disability insurance system to consolidate the hodgepodge of different income support programs for disabled persons.

As I read through the proposed changes to the Constitution, I couldn't believe how eleven men could have the audacity to sit in camera and then present to the people of Canada changes that would result in a substantial devolution of powers to the provinces and a substantial reduction in the impact and powers of the federal government. At the very least, there was something wrong with a process that could alter the fundamental law of the land *without* serious consultation and input from the public.

A day or so later, I sat with other constitutional law professors to settle on the materials for the subsequent year, when one of my colleagues mentioned in passing that we should add the Meech Lake accord into the course materials. I strongly objected, saying that it should never become law. To me, it represented a complete reversal of the country's constitutional evolution. It seemed obvious to me that it had the potential to create enormous rifts in, if not tear apart, the fabric of the Canada I loved.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced that the accord was not finalized. The premiers would return to their home cities and discuss it in their respective legislatures, then return for another meeting a few weeks later in the Langevin Block. This provided some time to mobilize opposition.

My instinct that Canadians would find such hasty reforms cooked up behind closed doors to be distasteful proved accurate. I was interviewed on CBC Radio's Metro Morning program and announced a rally at the University of Toronto's Law School, the purpose of which was to send a message to the premiers that the accord was unacceptable in its present form. Without thinking about it, I gave the law school's general phone number, and the school's lines were soon jammed with people calling to find out the time and directions. When it became obvious that hundreds would be coming, the dean reluctantly decided to attend and introduce a panel discussion I had organized. Historian Michael Bliss agreed to be the "conservative" co-chair, with me as the "liberal." That evening, we announced the formation of a multi-partisan group, first called the Group of 22 and later renamed the Coalition on the Constitution. (Michael Ignatieff's father, George, an eminent Canadian diplomat, was among our founding members and remained a supporter until his death in 1989.)

By the time the premiers met with the prime minister on June 2 and 3, 1987, it was clear that several of the provinces were rethinking their positions on key elements of the agreement, especially the distinct-society clause and the limitations on federal spending powers. In part, they may have been listening to the critics. Even Pierre emerged from retirement to condemn the accord. In an article published in both *Le Devoir* and *The Toronto Star* on May 27, he called Mulroney a *pleutre* (coward) and wrote that Meech was a "victory for those who never wanted a charter of rights entrenched in the Constitution." He added that Meech would "render the Canadian state totally impotent."

The next step: a three-year period began in which Meech had to be approved by Parliament and all provincial legislatures.

I had been planning to go on a trip to India and China that summer until I realized Prime Minister Mulroney seemed hell-bent on ramming the accord through the relevant parliamentary committees as soon as possible. Instead of travelling, I spent the summer in my small office on the top floor of Falconer Hall, one of the two old University of Toronto Law School buildings, contacting people across the country to build the basis of a national organization. In those pre-Internet, pre-Facebook days, doing so required a lot of energy: phone calls; writing submissions for various people who wanted to appear before federal and provincial committees; and late-night photocopying sessions with volunteers at the nearby office of my good friend, Paul Torrie, preparing material that had to be sent via courier the next day (even faxing wasn't common in those days).

It astounds me to think what we could have accomplished if we'd had access to today's instant communications and extensive social media opportunities. I believe opposition to the accord would have coalesced so quickly that it would have forced the first ministers to back down and save Canada from three terrible years of divisive and damaging debate that increasingly alienated the public from self-absorbed political elites.

On June 30, we officially launched the Coalition on the Constitution, with coordinators in every province, including John Kidder (brother of actor Margot and future Liberal candidate in the 2011 election) in BC; Murray Smith, a former MP under John Diefenbaker, in Alberta; and Céline Hervieux-Payette, a former MP in Pierre's government who would, years later, become the first female leader of the opposition in the Senate, in Quebec. Representing the Coalition, I made a presentation on August 27 to the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution, which was examining the accord. I was accompanied that day by a good friend, astronaut Marc Garneau. Three years earlier, Marc had been the first Canadian in outer space on the shuttle Challenger. He was later to become the president of the Canadian Space Agency and then, after the 2008 federal election, the Liberal MP for the Montreal riding of Westmount-Ville-Marie.

If my activities weren't, strictly speaking, partisan, at the very least they were regarded as problematic by the dean. In the spring of 1988, I was formally instructed to focus almost exclusively on completing "vertical research" (translation: highly abstract papers with detailed footnotes appearing in academic publications and read by a tiny readership of experts) or my future as a tenured law professor would be over.

After some reflection, I decided to resign. It was a hard decision (I would have happily made my home at the law school), but I felt irresistibly drawn to more political involvement than a full-time academic position would allow. I didn't want to be an observer in an ivory tower. Instead, I passionately wanted to be an agent of change, someone who could contribute to making Canada a better place, which meant having the freedom to oppose the Meech Lake accord. In doing so, I became part of what the political elites tried to paint as a subversive and pernicious group of malcontents trying to derail Meech. To quote Bruce Cockburn's powerful protest song released two years earlier in 1986, "and they call it democracy."

My passion was always to pursue political goals, but I still had to make a living, of course. (Years later, when journalist Andrew Cohen profiled me in *Saturday Night* magazine, I jokingly said, "I was like a less-developed country in the 1980s. Always in debt.") I continued to teach a couple of courses on a part-time basis for another year, but finally left academe in June 1988. After a brief stint on the early morning shift of the CBC Radio's Metro Morning show, working on possible stories, I became a policy analyst for the Ontario Human Rights Commission, from late 1988 to April 1989. Hired to help in the drafting of new guidelines to deal with discrimination arising from an individual's HIV status, I was doing real-world work that mattered. Human rights law is a major way we protect vulnerable people, and the guidelines, later adopted by the Commission, reflected both an ethical and effective way for the public sector to respond to those suffering from HIV and AIDS.

Incidentally, although I was very busy, I hadn't lost my love of going off on adventures. In the summer of 1988, I travelled alone for almost two months in India, Pakistan, and China. I slept on the floor of the Mumbai airport the first night and smelled death in the slums around the busy downtown train station. Later I squeezed onto a dramatically overcrowded train to Delhi, taking turns with other passengers precariously perching between the cars just to get some fresh air.

I took a local bus from Rawalpindi-Islamabad up to the Swat Valley, where army personnel met me with guns, demanding to know why I was there (apparently tourists were forbidden). I travelled in a jeep from village to village with a guy carrying supplies to local establishments (each village had a barrier where sentries armed with Kalashnikovs regarded suspiciously a Western woman travelling alone). I explored mountains and caves where, years later, Osama Bin Laden likely spent time. Finally, I reached a place where I could catch a rickety bus over the Himalayas toward China via the Karakoram Highway. The Pakistan-Chinese border crossing is at an altitude of 21,000 feet. There we transferred into a Chinese bus. I then followed the old Silk Road through the Uyghur region, Kashgar, and on to Urumqi. Finally, by train I travelled through Xian, Beijing, Chongqing, Kunming, Guilin, and, Hong Kong before returning to Mumbai.

These trips, along with my other travels, eventually led to my concept of “Canadians without borders” and a website I created in 2008 to present my ideas. I saw myself as the kind of “global citizen” who I believe symbolizes the modern Canadian. People from all over the world come to our country to live together peaceably, compassionately, and respectfully as one nation. It is our destiny to prove that a progressive, vigorous, multiethnic democracy can thrive in the twenty-first century and be a model for a troubled world. As I have written on my website, “with a clear global vision and bold national leadership, Canadians are uniquely positioned to be in the front ranks of a world without borders.”

But that was in the future.

Back to May 1989: I accepted a five-year position as program officer for the Walter and Duncan Gordon Charitable Foundation. The late Walter Gordon was a businessman and Liberal politician who was active at the beginning of the economic nationalism movement in Canada. In the late '50s, he chaired the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects, which brought to public attention rising foreign ownership in our economy, especially in the resource sector. When he entered politics, serving in Lester Pearson's Liberal government as both minister of finance in the mid-'60s and, later, president of the Privy Council, Gordon championed cultural and economic nationalism as well as the expansion of the country's social programs.

In the '60s, he and his brother, Duncan, created the charitable foundation to fund worthy causes in such areas as education, health care, the environment, and the arts. It also supported organizations active in furthering economic independence, peacekeeping, and nuclear disarmament. The foundation's activities attracted my interest, for I saw myself as part of the “nuclear generation” — the first generation to grow up in the shadow of nuclear Armageddon — in search of a more peaceful world. My job was to work with the executive director and Walter Gordon's three children, assessing proposals that addressed three key areas: peace and security issues, developing national standards in the public education system, and developing Canada's North. It was a job I highly valued, exactly the kind of rewarding work I had been seeking.

At the same time, I was still writing articles critiquing the Meech Lake accord and organizing opposition to it. It had become something of a mission for me. I had further correspondence with Michael Ignatieff, and in December 1987, he wrote thanking me for a Christmas card,

adding, “I follow your fight against Meech with approval . . . I hope the likes of you are taking over the Liberal Party. It needs all the help it can get.”

I would end up playing a significant role in the Meech Lake accord, as it turned out, although not by becoming formally involved with the Liberal Party. In the meantime, another significant event happened in my life during the mid-to-late '80s.

6. Kindred Spirits

In December 1985, I decided to send Pierre a copy of my North-South Institute publication and update him on what I was doing. Given my interest in and involvement with the Liberal Party, I was curious to hear his perspective on the party's current state as well as on the often-contentious federal-provincial relations with Quebec. Although we hadn't been in touch since 1980 and had only a little indirect contact when the PMO helped me get accredited to attend the North-South Summit in Cancun, I figured he'd remember me, the daughter of family friends with a strong interest in government and constitutional issues.

I was pleased when he replied and suggested lunch in Montreal sometime. As it happened, I was going to Montreal on some Insurance Task Force business.

We arranged to meet and, over lunch, we talked about my experience at Oxford and about North-South relations. When we moved on to my various post-university jobs, it became evident that Pierre was not especially enthralled with two of my previous employers, John Turner and Tom d'Aquino. We talked a bit about constitutional matters, especially about the impact of the charter and equality rights. He was interested in my perception of the patriation debate from my vantage point at that time, England. At one point, he chuckled and remarked on how much he owed to two strong women, Queen Elizabeth and Margaret Thatcher, for fending off the neo-colonialists in London.

He also said that, despite his commitment to staying out of active politics for two years, he had been asked for advice by the newly elected Liberal government in Quebec on how it should negotiate its formal adherence to the 1982 Constitution. He thought that Quebec should have an effective constitutional veto over future changes — the point that PQ leader René Lévesque had been willing to accept in 1981 — but acknowledged that many Quebec Liberals feared that it was insufficient to fend off the separatists. Much of that was new to me, since I'd not closely followed the drama surrounding the final negotiations that led to patriation in 1982. The Meech Lake accord was still more than two years away, and at that time there were no signs that the Mulroney government was looking at constitutional negotiations of any kind. I was mainly interested in how Canada was adjusting to the charter and the Liberal Opposition's ineffectiveness in dealing with some of Mulroney's more conservative policies.

In the months to come in 1986, that lunch led to other lunches and one night to dinner with Pierre and his sons. Once, when I was in Montreal to attend a friend's wedding, our route to the reception went right past his house on Avenue des Pins. Coincidentally, he was arriving home at that moment. I said nothing to my companions in the car because I'd kept my friendship with Pierre private, with the exception of my closest friends, Paul and Mary Jane

Torrie. At the reception, though, I found myself wanting to leave, walk up the street, and visit with him rather than wait until our scheduled lunch the following day.

Returning to Toronto, I thought about how intensely I missed Pierre's company between visits. I'd always been a true romantic, believing I would instantly know when I met the right person, my kindred spirit. At that time, I was 30 and had yet to meet my soulmate. So, one day, I called him and initiated an awkward conversation, telling him how I felt and how I was struggling to come to grips with what seemed like an absurd situation, surely condemned by the difference in our ages, if nothing else. After all, Pierre was 67 at the time, although he was single, having divorced Margaret two years earlier.

He was characteristically calm when he heard what I had to say and simply suggested that I come to Montreal so that we could discuss it. Instead of lunch, we went to his chalet outside Morin Heights in the Laurentian Mountains an hour northwest of Montreal and talked openly about our feelings and our personal circumstances. Pierre was frank, both about the mutual attraction and the reality that I was interested in a more intense relationship than he could provide at that stage in his life. I know he wanted to reassure himself that in no sense was he taking advantage of me. He was not. I understood him perfectly well.

However, I had to make one significant decision. I didn't want Pierre — or anyone else, for that matter — thinking that I was only interested in him to bolster my political ambitions. So I decided not to pursue a run for the nomination in the Beaches riding, despite the fact that Don Brown, my former Blake, Cassels colleague and a strong Liberal, had already sent out fundraising letters soliciting funds to support my run. I requested that Don return the contributions we'd received. As for the reason, all I told Don and Pierre was that I felt that, at 31, I wasn't quite ready. Pierre reassured me, saying, "Well, Debbie, I didn't get elected until I was almost 50." (I would ironically think back to that comment as I finally prepared, in 2005, to accept my first nomination as a Liberal candidate shortly after my 50th birthday.)

As my relationship with Pierre developed through 1986, we began spending more time together, mainly weekends at the chalet when the boys were with Margaret in Ottawa. He made it clear from the beginning that the boys were his first priority and that remarriage was out of the question, although he also said that he regretted he wasn't 20 years younger because there might have been a different outcome. Ever the rational man, he was more realistic than I was about our age difference. He urged me not to give up on the idea of meeting someone else, drawing a distinction between *loving* and being *in love*. Pierre was also keenly aware that he was treated like a celebrity. He told me he was surprised that anyone would want to go out with him, since the media speculated on his every move.

We had much in common: a love of travel and that particular solitude one finds in the wilderness; a fascination with international politics; an enthusiasm for theatre and films. We often used Pierre's lifetime pass at Cineplex theatres to see a movie, or sometimes a "double-header" (two movies, one in the afternoon and a second in the evening). We both considered cinema to be a window on society because directors were often ahead of political commentators and the media. Some of the international films we especially enjoyed were those of the French Nouvelle Vague movement — by Truffaut, Malle, and Resnais. These filmmakers were concerned with historical memory and social context, which fueled many

long, enjoyable conversations afterwards. We talked about the causes and effects of revolution, the need for counterweights in any power structure, the protection of human rights, the role of government, and public action in pursuing greater equality.

Pierre was very much a part of the arts and culture milieu. (Among many other things, he was a good friend of Canadian film director Norman Jewison and, for at least one season, on the jury for the Montreal International Film Festival.) Together we attended such events as the opening of the Livent production of *Macbeth*, starring Christopher Plummer, and a special screening of films by the Czech director Jiri Menzel, whose dark comedy, *My Sweet Little Village*, was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. One memorable night out we saw a dance performance by Margie and Christopher Gillis, which included Molly Bloom's monologue from Joyce's *Ulysses*. Pierre would occasionally comment on, and was sensitive to, the contrast between the emotional fragility of so many of his artistic friends and what he saw as my fierce independence and emotional stability.

We didn't always agree, of course. We argued over why the federal government didn't intervene in the infamous Churchill Falls hydro agreement, giving Quebec long-term access to discount-priced power from Newfoundland and Labrador. Signed decades earlier by Premier Joey Smallwood, it was an awful financial deal for Newfoundland. Pierre was sympathetic but always said he had to bow to the political imperatives of Quebec. He would get very defensive when we talked about the occasional need for a government to act forcefully in a democracy, as in the October Crisis. Insisting that former Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa was so agitated about the events that he demanded that the federal government invoke the *War Measures Act*, Pierre remembered the opposition he faced among the ranks of respected human rights academics, including my former Osgoode professor, Walter Tarnopolsky. He admitted that he was thankful that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms now existed to provide some guidance in future crises.

It was at Pierre's chalet outside Morin Heights that we shared the solitude that so calmed both of us. We witnessed stunning displays of northern lights above the lake he named Jusami, after his three sons, Justin, Sacha (Alexandre), and Michel. Inside the winterized house built by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson, we usually reheated prepared meals in a microwave, most of them made by the couple who ran Pierre's house in Montreal. While both Pierre and I distrusted microwaves (he had a gadget that measured any microwave leakage), our mutual disinterest in anything but the most basic cooking meant we used the microwave anyway.

In the winter, we skied and snowshoed, and one winter cut down his family's Christmas tree. Once we even got lost in a blizzard in frigid temperatures — a harrowing experience. In the summer, we swam, canoed, and hiked (sabotaging beaver dams that stopped the flow of water between the lakes), conducted controlled burnings, and confronted trespassing hunters and fishermen and asked them to leave.

Pierre loved both chocolate and popcorn. Among the gifts he regularly received were superb chocolates from a visiting Middle Eastern politician and, one Christmas, chocolate-flavoured toothpaste. In 1988, after acquiring Bloomingdale's as part of his Federated Department Stores acquisition, developer and financier Robert Campeau sent Pierre a cubic metre of Bloomingdale's popcorn.

I didn't have much interaction with his sons beyond a couple of family dinners. Pierre first introduced me to them as someone who knew their mother. He wanted them to meet me and not feel that I was a threatening presence in any way. Since I had started teaching at the U of T Law School that summer, he explained that I was a law teacher, as he himself had once been.

I would have settled down with Pierre, even married him, but he had a life that involved both numerous public commitments, even at that later stage of his life, and his family. He wasn't prepared to commit to anything. We never intended to have children. At his age, and with the three sons he was so proud of, he understandably didn't see having another child in his future. He was also extraordinarily busy. In one letter he wrote to me on November 5, 1990, he listed his upcoming itinerary:

. . . As for me, in spite of my efforts, things are becoming rather hectic. Tonight I have to make an appearance at the Authors Awards. Wednesday a benefit for the Writers' Development Trust. Friday I fly to London for some days at Sheik Yamani's Center for Global Energy Studies. From there a couple of days of wine tasting in the Bordelais. Return to Montreal on Saturday the 17th, then to New York on the 20th to meet a group from *New Perspectives Quarterly*. In Paris from November 26th to the 30th with Power Corporation's International Advisory Council . . .

Given the circumstances, I understood and accepted the way things had to be. Our relationship together was no less significant or meaningful, just because it was unconventional.

By 1990, Canada was beginning to recover from the drama of the Meech Lake accord, which had just been defeated. And I was recovering too, after having been right at the epicentre of Meech myself, working closely with the man who, to supporters of the accord, was the principal architect of its demise.

7. Newfoundland and Labrador

On a sunny Friday afternoon in June 1989, I stood in a dimly lit corridor of Toronto's Sheraton Centre, knocking on the door of a suite. The day before, I had received a phone call from the office of Newfoundland premier Clyde Wells asking if I was available for a meeting. I gathered the premier knew about my involvement organizing the Canadian Coalition on the Constitution and the essays I'd had published critiquing Meech, including my most recent one in the June 1989 issue of *Policy Options*, which had likely inspired him to contact me.

When Meech was negotiated in 1987, then Newfoundland premier Brian Peckford had supported it because he thought decentralizing federal powers would give provinces more control over natural resources such as fisheries management. But in January 1989, Peckford retired and Wells, a former corporate and constitutional lawyer, won the general election held that April.

Wells opened the door and ushered me inside the suite. We discussed Meech and other issues for more than an hour. I found him relaxed and informal, sincere and direct. I thought it was very good news that a man so firmly principled was in an effective position to oppose Meech. As I was leaving, Wells said he was looking for a constitutional advisor and he would like to hire me.

As attractive as that sounded, I had been hopping from one job to another and had only just started at the Gordon Foundation, so I thanked him but declined. We agreed, however, to stay in touch.

After the Quebec election in September 1989, when Bourassa won a majority, I decided to ask Wells if he still felt determined to rescind the accord. He said yes and again offered me the job. I suspect that one of the characteristics Wells liked in me was my belief that the accord was fundamentally flawed and that I was part of a growing coalition across the country opposing it.

Believing it would probably be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to play a role in the destiny of my country, I talked over a few details with him. We agreed to meet again a week later when he was back in Toronto. I reluctantly submitted my letter of resignation to the Gordon Foundation and flew to St. John's on Thanksgiving Sunday.

From the beginning of Meech until the opposition firmed up a couple of years later, Pierre and I often discussed the accord. We both understood the political dynamics of an agreement that undermined a strong, coherent national government and a commitment to individual rights, although initially he was more focused on the "distinct society" clause than I was. He often said he was disheartened by how many of his friends and advisors were dubious about the possibility of defeating the accord. I was always so enthusiastically positive that the accord would be defeated that he considered me a good antidote to the general mood. He referred to me as "the wild optimist."

What fed my optimism in 1989 was meeting Clyde Wells, who I believed could become the effective leader of the opposition to Mulroney's vision of the accord that we did not have in Parliament at that time. As I began working with Wells, I saw that he was clear and firm in his belief that Meech would give Quebec greater legislative powers than the other provinces, creating a situation where it would be nearly impossible to enact future constitutional reforms. He also believed it would weaken federal funding to Canada's poorer provinces. He and I agreed that Mulroney's Meech efforts were based on simply threatening the opponents of the accord with the false assertion that defeating the accord would revive the separatist movement in Quebec and threaten national unity.

Wells and I made a good team, in part because we didn't share identical views. He was premier of a small have-not province on the edge of "outer Canada." I was a central Canadian with a "national" point of view. I believed a veto for Quebec would enhance that province's sense of security within the Canadian federation. He opposed any province having a veto, probably because he suspected that large provinces would use their vetoes to prevent constitutional reform that might favour small provinces. I agreed with Wells that an elected and effective senate was desirable but disagreed with him about equal representation for all

provinces. (He thought it was necessary; I didn't.) For Wells, "equality of citizens" meant the equality of representatives of citizens in the House of Commons — one person, one vote. For me and many others, "equality of citizens" referred to the equal application of charter rights to all Canadians, and meant that no government, federal *or* provincial, should be given enhanced powers to justify limits on our individual rights. Still, despite his strongly held views, Wells wasn't afraid of criticism and was always open to debate the issues. We had many intense exchanges over the following year, but our mutual respect and our opposition to the accord made for a good working relationship. And in a time of growing cynicism in politics, Wells' openness and willingness to look for the best in people was refreshing.

One of my first tasks was to help Wells draft a private letter to Mulroney, outlining Wells' criticisms of Meech in a constructive way so Quebecers wouldn't think that Newfoundland's position was anti-Quebec. Among the alternatives to existing provisions in the accord, Wells severely criticized the closed-door process that had led to the agreement. He felt the strengths and weaknesses of the accord had to be openly debated so that the electorate could participate.

Wells' insistence that the constitutional reform process had to be opened up had an impact far beyond his own province. As I had anticipated, it struck a populist chord across Canada. Suddenly, millions of Canadians who had felt excluded by their political leaders had someone representing them. I heard him repeat many times afterwards the line that he first set out in that original letter to the prime minister: "The worst flaw in the Meech Lake accord is the process that resulted in the eleven first ministers telling the 26 million people of Canada how they will be governed in the future, instead of the 26 million people of Canada telling the eleven first ministers how they will govern."

The letter was sent to Mulroney on the afternoon of October 18, 1989. Two days later, *Globe and Mail* columnist Jeffrey Simpson called me to say that Lowell Murray, Mulroney's minister responsible for federal-provincial relations, had told him about the premier's letter, and he wanted to write about it. This led to quite a discussion in Wells' office. I wanted to go on the offensive and publicly release the letter before it was leaked so that Wells could control the situation. But Wells, with his impeccable, but sometimes infuriating, sense of fair play, felt that since it had been a private correspondence with Mulroney, the Prime Minister should be given a chance to respond. But Mulroney was out of the country. Finally, Wells told us to go ahead and make the letter public. Suddenly, with the Manitoba and New Brunswick reports being released in a matter of days, Wells' strong viewpoint on the accord received front-page coverage, and Wells himself did many radio and TV interviews across the country, making Newfoundland symbolic of the anti-Meech position.

I'd been consumed with constitutional matters for years by that point, but what I found fascinating about Meech was the way Canadians became intensely involved in the debate. As many observed, after patriation the Canadian public felt a sense of ownership in what was now seen as "their" constitution and were offended at the idea that matters that would ultimately define Canada might be conducted behind closed doors.

Throughout that period of debate and citizen engagement, one citizen who especially caught my attention was my jovial uncle, Peter Gouin, who was married to my father's sister, Sally Coyne. Although he had grown up in Saskatchewan and in his retirement lived in Ottawa,

Uncle Peter was distantly related to the distinguished Quebec politician Lomer Gouin, who served as the thirteenth premier of Quebec, as the Liberal justice minister under Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and briefly, before he died, as lieutenant-governor of Quebec. Although my uncle was critically ill during that time, he wrote several letters to the Parliamentary committee hearings, expressing his deep concerns about Meech from the perspective of a *francophone hors Québec*.

When Wells tabled Newfoundland's alternatives to Meech in the House of Assembly on November 8, the day before a scheduled first ministers conference in Ottawa, the press conference afterwards was given a full hour of coverage on CBC *Newsworld*. Today renamed *Canada News Network*, the all-news network, which at that time had only been broadcasting for four months, was already proving to have a far-reaching impact. Again and again, I discovered that *Newsworld* (during that period sometimes called *Meechworld*) was the most effective way to reach Canadians from coast to coast. It contributed greatly to the groundswell of popular support building for Wells.

If the pace and intensity of the Meech proceedings weren't surreal enough, on Saturday, November 9, 1989 (the opening day of the first ministers conference on the Meech Lake accord), the Berlin Wall fell. An East German government official made what at first sounded like just another bureaucratic statement: "Permanent relocations can be done through all border checkpoints" between East Germany and West Germany. With what was soon known as the fall of the Berlin Wall, people streamed back and forth across the border, family and friends reuniting. Crowds covered the Wall, chipping away at it with hammers, chisels or any instrument that would break it apart. It was a chaotic mob scene of singing, crying, hugging, and kissing. Symbolically, the Cold War had ended and democracy was restored. Yet in Canada, petty politics threatened to destabilize the country.

My friend Marc Garneau and I got together that weekend to go flying. We hadn't seen each other for a while but were still on the same page about Meech. Marc always kept up the hours he needed to log for his pilot's certification, so he took me up in a Cessna where he practised stalling over Meech Lake. That somehow seemed symbolic as well.

At the opening session of the first ministers conference, the premiers sat around a large round table with the prime minister. Each premier was to make a short opening statement, with this first session finishing at noon to leave time for in camera meetings after lunch. But the statements ran for so long that it was late afternoon before it was finally time for Wells to speak. Most of the premiers had uncritically supported the accord, so I was pleased when Wells read the entire constitutional section of the speech we had prepared. He eloquently argued that Meech created a Canada with a class A province, a class B province, and eight class C provinces.

To my amazement, in response to Wells, Mulroney repeated what he'd said to Wells during a phone conversation a few days earlier about the alleged exclusion of Quebec in 1982 as justification for the accord. During that conversation, Wells had firmly disagreed and articulated the position that Quebec had not been excluded from the Constitution, that it was a divisive myth. So why, I wondered, had Mulroney raised it again? Had he underestimated Wells, thinking perhaps that Wells wouldn't contradict him in public? In any event, I sensed

as soon as Mulroney began his argument that the two men were about to engage in a verbal duel that would result in many Canadians feeling even more of an affinity for Wells. As I expected, Wells forcefully argued that no province was entitled to special legislative status or to hold up the constitutional development of the country, whether in 1982 or 1989. CBC anchor Peter Mansbridge later called it “the riveting 15-minute encounter.”

Since then, I’ve spoken to many people who saw the exchange either live on television or later on the news, which replayed it over and over. Without exception, they all expressed support for Wells, especially because he was standing up to Mulroney, for whom many Canadians were developing a visceral dislike. Look no further than the polls for evidence. A majority of Canadians outside Quebec favoured the accord in 1987; by 1990, as Wells’ personal popularity soared, a majority opposed it.

It was at this first ministers conference that Wells emerged as the national voice representing Meech’s opponents.

8. High Stakes: Rolling the Dice

The basic details of Meech are well-known. Today, the debate may seem to some like a lot of wrangling over dry and convoluted constitutional minutiae; at the time, though, Meech was a wild roller-coaster ride for the entire nation.

Wells was in high demand around the country, traveling to Ontario, Quebec, and the four western provinces in January 1990. In mid January, Wells visited Montreal for a speech to the Canadian Club and a private meeting with Premier Bourassa. In the evening he attended a small private gathering in his honour hosted by former Liberal cabinet minister Donald Johnston. There I was fortunate to meet Mordecai Richler, one of the most fervent and eloquent opponents of Meech. He had an unparalleled ability to colourfully cut to the chase on the dangers of elevating group rights inherent in the distinct society clause over fundamental individual rights of all those not belonging to that distinct society. One of his most pithy comments was something along the lines of: "If Quebec is a distinct society, what are the rest of us, chopped liver?"

Pierre was also there and we chatted casually together with the other guests. We left together and Pierre’s great friend and legal colleague, Jean Potvin, gave us a lift to our respective destinations: Pierre to his house and I to a hotel where I was staying overnight while on Newfoundland business. Pierre and I spent that weekend at Morin Heights before I returned to St. John's. A couple of years later, when Jean Potvin learned of the arrival of our daughter, he joked with Pierre about how effectively we had concealed the nature of our relationship at the Wells reception.

In March 1990, New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna, who led the save-Meech brigade, introduced a companion resolution, essentially draft set of resolutions to accompany Meech, addressing unresolved issues like the rights of women and Native Canadians, Senate reform, and clarification that the existing distinct-society clause would never override the charter. Two weeks later, Quebec’s National Assembly passed a motion rejecting any proposals that would

modify Meech, including McKenna's. At about the same time, the Newfoundland House of Assembly formally rescinded support for the accord.

A special Commons committee was briefly established to study McKenna's companion resolution to Meech, headed by former Mulroney cabinet minister (and future Quebec premier) Jean Charest. Predictably, the committee expeditiously tabled a report endorsing McKenna's companion resolution and adding a few new recommendations for good measure, including some aimed at appeasing Canada's Aboriginal population.

It was an inside-baseball approach that illustrated all too clearly the fundamental flaws in any closed-door, intergovernmental strategy for constitutional reform.

On Sunday, June 3, 1990, Mulroney and the ten provincial premiers met in Ottawa for dinner, a prelude to what was supposed to be a one-day meeting the next day. Instead, it turned into a marathon, week-long negotiating session. Everything was focused on the June 23 deadline. By law, the accord had to be unanimously ratified by then or it died. At the end of the week, on Sunday, June 10, Mulroney announced that they had reached an agreement, although that was not the case. The behind-the-scenes machinations had been convoluted and intense, with allegiances shifting and boundaries established, then moved, almost daily.

Wells, despite the support he knew he had from Canadians across the country, was slowly getting worn down by the relentless pressure of the combined pro-Meech forces. Still, anyone listening closely would have heard him eloquently and cogently give the reasons why he was not approving the new agreement as it was, but was taking it back only for consideration by the people of his province. Under his signature on the agreement, he added a proviso that he would endorse it only after receiving his province's approval, either through referendum or a free vote in the provincial legislature.

When we arrived back in St. John's on June 11, hundreds of supporters greeted Wells at the airport, and he visibly re-connected to his fundamental beliefs. In the Newfoundland House of Assembly, the cabinet debated whether to hold a referendum or a free vote. Because of the tight time constraints, a referendum wasn't possible, so a debate was set to begin on June 20, after the members of Newfoundland's House of Assembly had been given a chance to return to their districts to consult their constituents.

Meanwhile, on the same day in Ottawa, the Prime Minister Mulroney was giving an interview to three *Globe and Mail* reporters. The next day, Tuesday, June 12, the story in the *Globe* made it clear that he had deliberately timed the first ministers conference to ensure a crisis atmosphere, to maximize pressure on the hold-out provinces, and to leave so little time that Newfoundland would not be able to hold a referendum. Until then, the delay had been attributed to uncertainty as to whether there was sufficient common ground among opponents of the accord to justify a meeting.

Mulroney's revelation was not particularly surprising to those familiar with his overwhelmingly political approach to matters, but his bluntness on this occasion was extraordinary. He said that he and his advisors had gathered at 24 Sussex a month before the June conference to map out the federal strategy. "Right here, I told them when it would be,"

Mulroney said. “I told them a month ago when we were going to [meet]. It’s like an election campaign. You count backward. [I said,] ‘that’s the day we’re going to roll the dice.’”

The reaction in Newfoundland was electric. The lead editorial in the St. John’s *Evening Telegram* demanded that the premier revoke his invitation to let Mulroney speak to the House of Assembly. For the remaining days of the debate, I coordinated responses to over 12,000 letters and faxes that arrived during the ten-day period. Without exaggeration, 95 percent of the calls and letters supported Wells. I could think of no more tangible a demonstration of how out of touch the other first ministers were with the feelings of Canadians about Meech.

At this point, all provincial legislatures had approved the accord except Manitoba and Newfoundland, so the success or failure of Meech rested on what would happen in two provinces. In the case of Manitoba, Premier Gary Filmon faced a procedural hurdle. Unless he could get unanimous approval of all members of the Manitoba legislature, public hearings had to be held, which would stretch beyond the deadline. On June 12, the province’s lone Aboriginal representative, Elijah Harper, strongly backed by Aboriginal groups across Canada, refused to give his consent.

The resolve of the Aboriginal leaders was encouraging and appropriate. Few were better placed to lead the opposition than the first inhabitants of Canada who, as so many pointed out, were surely as important, distinctive, and fundamental as any other group. In effect, they collectively put an abrupt end to the naive expectations that they could be bought off by minimal concessions thrown together by Mulroney and the pro-Meech forces.

I wasn’t surprised. Shortly after the first ministers conference, I had talked with Georges Erasmus of the Assembly of First Nations, John Amagoalik of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, and Chris McCormick of the Native Council of Canada. They told me bluntly that they thought the legal opinion annexed to the Charest Committee’s companion resolution had, for all intents and purposes, removed what little protection Aboriginal groups had in the accord. The original accord had at least stipulated that the distinct society clause did not affect Aboriginal rights in the charter or Parliament’s legislative jurisdiction in respect of “Indians, and Lands reserved for Indians.” Yet the companion resolution did not repeat the prior provision and, by implication, seemed to contradict it. I can’t think of a better example of why any constitutional reform in this country has to be transparent and open at every stage and take into account the interests of *everyone*.

What was left of Mulroney’s accord? Just more of Mulroney’s machinations. In a last-ditch effort, the federal government offered to apply to the Supreme Court to have the deadline for ratification pushed back to accommodate public hearings in Manitoba. But since ratification required the consent of all ten provinces plus Parliament, there was little point if the vote in the Newfoundland legislature was unsuccessful.

On the week of the vote, the prestigious British magazine *The Economist* ran an editorial bluntly criticizing the accord for the balkanizing instrument it was and accusing Mulroney of blatantly trying to appease Quebec. We distributed copies to all members of Newfoundland’s House of Assembly. I had to laugh when the opposition claimed that Wells was trying to unfairly manipulate the vote; this, at a time when Newfoundland’s own John Crosbie, an

ardent accord supporter and Mulroney cabinet minister, was camped outside the House of Assembly buttonholing Liberal members and making veiled threats of federal retribution if the accord failed!

On the afternoon of Friday, June 22, 1990, I was almost certain that Meech was dead. Wells had talked to most of his caucus about the fact that, since the accord was about to die with the Manitoba situation, the likely rejection of it in Newfoundland would just be throwing fuel on an already inflamed national debate. Wells, who didn't want Newfoundland to forever bear the legacy of being the sole assassin of the accord, began thinking that maybe the debate in the Newfoundland House of Assembly should be adjourned without a vote.

As he was still thinking about the best course of action, he tried to call Senator Lowell Murray, Mulroney's minister of state for federal-provincial relations and one of Meech's staunchest supporters. Wells was told that Murray had left his office. At almost the same moment, I received a call from a friend in Ottawa alerting me that Murray was about to hold a press conference. We all crowded around a TV to watch it on *Newsworld*, and I was stunned by what I heard. Murray had ambushed Wells by announcing that the federal government had found a way to extend the Meech deadline to allow Manitoba to hold its public hearings, but only if Newfoundland approved the accord.

Wells was livid. Mulroney was playing him like a chess piece. If Manitoba could have an extension, he thought, why couldn't the same apply to Newfoundland and Labrador? With the backing of his caucus, Wells put forward a motion to adjourn and the House voted in favour, thus deferring, likely forever, the vote on the Meech Lake accord.

Murray then held a press conference at which he held up a copy of the June 1990 agreement, pointed to Wells' signature, and complained that Wells had not lived up to his commitment (carefully omitting any reference to Wells' proviso written beneath his signature.)

In response, that evening Wells talked to the CBC's Peter Mansbridge, who asked about Murray's comments. A calm but exasperated Wells replied, "As to Senator Murray's finger-pointing, he'd better be careful it doesn't point more directly at himself and the prime minister . . . The federal government, the prime minister and Senator Murray, in particular, have been doing nothing but trying to manipulate and pressure Newfoundland into making a decision that was contrary to its wishes and contrary to its best interests . . ."

Remember the dramatic exchange between Wells and Mulroney at the November 1989 first ministers conference? Afterwards, Wells had called for the public to be involved in constitutional reform through a referendum. By way of example, he said he was prepared to put Meech to a referendum in Newfoundland. If the people wanted to approve it despite his opposition, his government would follow the people's verdict. He felt the same should apply at the national level.

A year later, the *Montreal Gazette's* brilliant cartoonist, Aislin (Terry Mosher), captured everything that was wrong with Meech in one simple image. It depicted Wells asking Mulroney, "But if Meech was as important to Canada as you've always said it was, why didn't

you let Canadians vote on the matter?” Mulroney replies: “Because, Clyde, it was far too important.”

I thought that all one could hope for was that, in the future, the Meech experience would ensure open, principled debate based on respect for the sovereignty of the Canadian people, and that a debacle like that would never happen again.

Over the next few days, I also thought about how relieved I was that the pro-Meech faction in Ottawa hadn't succeeded, despite its best efforts, to grind down Wells. He had managed to maintain his integrity and prove that openness and principles can win against game-playing and devious tactics.

In the aftermath of Meech, I tried to cope with an avalanche of correspondence and other cleaning-up duties. Finally, I decided I needed to “de-Meech” myself and chose, as my destination, Peru. On July 2, I flew to Lima with my knapsack and no itinerary. A colleague joked that if a constitutional crisis erupted while I was in Peru, he would know who was behind it. Well, the crisis may not have been constitutional but on the eve of my departure, the U.S. State Department declared Lima to be the second-most dangerous city in the world, next to Beirut. Once I arrived, it would not be far from the truth to say that I lived on the edge. The homeless regularly died in the streets, whether from the cold or from unnatural causes. Terrorists deliberately fueled insecurities by assassinating local leaders and disrupting water and electricity supplies. Street vendors rioted in an effort to acquire licences to sell.

Told by the consul-general that I should pretend to be a nun (advice I did not follow), I endured blackouts and incendiary bombs. I travelled overland from Macchu Picchu to Le Paz, Bolivia, and across Lake Titicaca, and then nearly crashed in the Andes while flying on a horribly maintained airplane. I found myself isolated in Iquitos on the Amazon River because terrorists had cut communication lines across northern Peru. I finally returned to Lima just as then president Alberto Fujimori declared martial law.

It was not everyone's idea of a vacation, I realize, but it certainly helped put Meech into perspective. Whenever I mentioned that I was from Canada, I could see envy and admiration in people's eyes. I managed to leave by catching a last-minute American Airlines flight from the chaotic Lima airport. As the plane pulled away from the gate, I thought how very lucky I was to be returning to a country like Canada.

9. Motherhood

In the fall of 1990, I made a surprising, but happy, discovery. I called Pierre and told him that I was expecting a baby.

Soon after, I visited him at his home in Montreal. He was happy for me but, ever the pragmatist, asked if I wanted to keep the baby, making it clear that he would support whatever decision I made. When I told him I intended to have the baby, we toasted. Later, we decided that if the baby were a girl, we would name her “Sarah,” the name of his grandmother, and a

family name on my father's side. By mutual agreement, we also decided that Sarah's surname would be Coyne, not Trudeau.

Pierre was not prepared to take any sort of active role in bringing up a small child and didn't want to disrupt the lives of his boys in any way. I told him that was fine; I had made the decision for myself. Sarah was born shortly after midnight on May 5, 1991. A month or so later, I flew with Sarah to Montreal, where Pierre picked us up at the airport and saw his daughter for the first time. He looked curious and pleased, in his reserved way, so characteristic of the man who skillfully controlled all aspects of his life. At Morin Heights, we took our daughter for walks and bathed her in the bathroom sink. I'd brought the baptismal papers, which he had to sign, and we discussed when his sons should be told of Sarah's arrival. Pierre wanted to wait until they'd finished school at the end of June.

That September, a *Globe and Mail* reporter discovered Pierre's name on the birth certificate in St. John's. Suddenly we became the unwilling subjects of a media sensation that lasted a few news cycles. We both dealt with it as best we could, which was by saying very little about what was, in our view, a private matter.

Pierre once told me that when he was barely 13 and his father died, he had felt angry and abandoned. An older father even to his own sons, he was determined not to have the same thing happen to them, which partly explains his dedication to them after retiring from politics in 1984. And he knew that there was an even greater likelihood that it would happen to Sarah. Because of that, he chose to play the role of a distant uncle.

His sons were older when Sarah was born —Justin was 20, Sacha 17, and Michel 15 — and Sarah and I rarely saw them. On one occasion we crossed paths for an evening at the chalet in Morin Heights, after the boys had skied during the day at Mont Tremblant. Michel, the youngest and an easy-going teenager, was very kind to Sarah. I especially remember him playing *Sesame Street* with her, along with her Elmo doll and her other stuffed animals.

There are many pictures of Pierre and Sarah together, but I'm particularly fond of one of them. In it, Pierre is holding Sarah and Elmo outside of Morin Heights.

On June 14, 1993, shortly after he had paid for Sarah's first real bed, he wrote, "I was glad to hear that you and Sarah are both well. A big bed is a milestone for her, and I hope she is enjoying it! Perhaps she will let you sleep a bit longer in the morning!"

In the summer of 1993, when Sarah was two, Pierre and I drove up to Meech Lake and borrowed a canoe to paddle over to see the old property where my family's cottage had been. (My parents had sold it to the National Capital Commission after the children had gone off to university. The cottage was torn down as part of a plan, eventually abandoned, to turn Meech Lake into a wilderness area closed to motorized watercraft.) There is nothing more melancholy than to see the old landmarks of one's childhood: the big swimming boulder, the lone cedar tree on the point, the old steps cut into the rocky hill and, of course, the gaps where the cottage and docks had once stood.

I'd bought a kite before Pierre visited Sarah and me in Ottawa in the fall of 1993. It was a very happy day for all of us. In a letter dated October 7, Pierre wrote, "Flying the kite with Sarah was for me a return to boyhood pleasures."

I became more and more absorbed in the responsibility of single motherhood. And I guess that finally our age difference and his unwillingness to play a larger role co-parenting our child proved insuperable. When I mentioned to him that I was thinking of applying for the job of director of the Montreal-based Institute for the Study of Canada, a position that would have been ideal for me, he responded in a discouraging way to the prospect of Sarah and I moving to Montreal. (Among other things, he stressed that Sarah and I wouldn't be able to just come by his home anytime we wanted to.) I decided not to apply and began distancing myself from him. We remained very good friends, staying in regular touch, even though visits became less and less frequent.

I married *Globe and Mail* journalist Michael Valpy in 1995. Although the marriage was to end just two years later, we had a son, Matthew, in December 1995. Matthew was diagnosed at a very young age with autism spectrum disorder, eventually refined to Asperger's syndrome. As any mother or father would know, that changed everything. It made parenthood fascinating, challenging, and sometimes a nearly all-consuming commitment. It certainly made my long-standing ambition of running for political office impossible to think about for a number of years.

In January 1999, a couple of months after Michel Trudeau's tragic death in an avalanche while skiing in British Columbia, I booked one of those economical, all-inclusive vacations at a modest resort in Cuba for Sarah, Matthew, and me. Pierre, devastated by Michel's death and deep in his own personal grieving process, decided to join us there. We met him at the airport and watched as he patiently got through all the autograph-seekers and people wanting to have their pictures taken with him. We had a really lovely time together: lazy dinners and walking along the beach with the children. I treasure a heartwarming picture of Pierre and Sarah standing in the sand, Pierre holding a smiling Sarah's arms outstretched.

These memories of the children and Pierre, together with memories of our days sitting around the chalet, reading books and articles and having long conversations afterwards, will remain with me always.

Now I'll take you back to the post-Meech era of the early '90s, when, against all odds, I found myself at the centre of another constitutional storm.

10. Charlottetown: History Repeats Itself

I stayed on in St. John's, as Wells' director of constitutional policy, for another 16 months after the Meech Lake accord collapsed. However, I realized that my status as a "come from away" made my prospects for involvement in national politics in Newfoundland next to zero.

In the fall of 1991, I moved back to Ottawa to become a senior advisor at Informetrica Limited. Co-founded by economist Mike McCracken, one of the most intelligent and articulate

observers of Canada I've ever met, Informetrica specialized in qualitative economic research and analysis of Canada's economic prospects and public policy. McCracken was incredibly accommodating as I struggled to balance my first year of single motherhood with work. He even permitted me a leave of absence in the summer of 1992, when I was inevitably drawn into the Charlottetown accord.

After the failure of Meech, Charlottetown was the culmination of another series of deliberations intended to amend the Constitution. It was an equally complicated set of constitutional reforms expanding Meech to include provisions on Aboriginal self-government and Senate reform that, in many respects, seemed like a replay of Meech, with the public again under-consulted and bullied to fall into line. With Michael Behiels, a University of Ottawa history professor, I co-founded Canada For All Canadians, one of the registered "no" committees during the campaign leading up to the 1992 national referendum. At the same time, I co-wrote a little book, *No Deal: Why Canadians Should Reject the Mulroney Constitution*, with law professor Robert Howse, whom I had taught at U of T and who subsequently had become a close friend. In it we outlined Charlottetown's deficiencies. "There is absolutely no reason to think that this Accord will bring constitutional peace," we wrote. "What does history suggest about pacts and armistices made under threats and intimidation? They lack all moral authority and soon dissolve into chaos and conflict."

In hindsight, many thought opposition to Charlottetown was a lost cause from the beginning, although that wouldn't have stopped me even if I'd believed it at the time. Since when do we retreat from our beliefs just because we might be defeated? Mulroney had loaded the dice this time, though. Setting the tone by calling opponents of the accord "enemies of Canada," he appointed former prime minister Joe Clark as minister of constitutional affairs to pull together support for the new agreement. The political elite, media, and both the cultural and business communities supported it. Liberals either endorsed it or stayed quietly on the sidelines. Even Clyde Wells, who had decided that sufficient progress had been made toward Senate reform and addressing Aboriginal concerns, was on board.

We may have been on opposite sides of the subsequent constitutional accord, but Wells and I respected each other too much to be combatants. As I became a principal voice opposing the accord, giving frequent speeches, being interviewed by the media, appearing on talk shows, and taking part in debates, we carefully declined any one-on-one encounters.

Canada For All Canadians gained a reputation as the only credible pan-Canadian "no" committee. As a result, the media took us seriously. (Others on the "no" side tended to represent narrower interests. For example, I kept a cautious distance when contacted by Preston Manning, then leading the newly created Reform Party, since his opposition had a strong anti-Quebec flavour that I thought was counter-productive.)

In Ottawa for a series on the accord taped for BCTV, I debated Justice Minister (and MP for Vancouver Centre) Kim Campbell. In the fall of 1992, I ended up in tiny Hanna, Alberta, debating accord-supporter James Horsman, Alberta's deputy premier. He accused me of being a centralist who wanted to maintain the status quo in Canada (translation: the country was controlled by Ontario and Quebec). He even dropped the three words guaranteed to be explosive in Alberta: National Energy Program, accusing me of representing the forces behind

it. (Aside from trying to enflame Albertans with the much-hated energy initiative of the early '80s, he was also making a veiled reference to my relationship with Pierre.) I chose to ignore any provocation, an approach I have always found to be effective, and simply explained that the accord was all about scaring the people of Canada, about caving in to pressure from Quebec, and about laying the groundwork for a hierarchy of rights that would destroy the equality of Canadians. My arguments won me a lot of support, even in that rural Alberta community.

One of my supporters was the late Izzy Asper, the Winnipeg-based media mogul, who underwrote and arranged to have videotaped our authorized advertisements (permitted under the referendum guidelines). Since 1987, we'd had the occasional late-night phone conversations to discuss the Meech opposition, and I was finally able to meet him while speaking at a Charlottetown event in Winnipeg. He was a passionate Canadian who saw the weaknesses of both the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords.

One nice moment that fall was when I returned to Newfoundland, for the first time since my move back to Ottawa, to debate the province's former populist premier, Brian Peckford. A footnote to this period: I found it surprising to read Peckford's remarks, made to a Newfoundland media outlet in the fall of 2012, about me and Wells: "A very bright lady, very articulate, who took a real interest in stating that the Meech Lake accord was not right. I think she had a big influence over him at the time." Kind words, but definitely a misreading of Wells. While Wells always listened carefully to those he respected, neither I, nor anyone else, could have influenced an intelligent, principled, and strong-willed man like him.

Despite the hundreds of thousands of dollars in advertising spent by the "yes" side, Canadians really debated the issues at stake and, in the referendum of October 26, 1992, defeated the accord, even in Quebec and in separate votes in First Nations communities. And so ended an incredibly and unnecessarily divisive period in our nation's history. Appropriately, Mulroney's approval rating dropped to 11 percent in a 1992 Gallup poll, making him among the most unpopular prime ministers in the half-century since the introduction of opinion polling in Canada. He retired just two months before the '93 federal election, replaced by his defence minister, Kim Campbell. With little time to rebuild the party, Campbell suffered the worst defeat by a governing federal party in history. (In case anyone thinks Michael Ignatieff led the Liberals to a record disaster in 2011, winning only 34 seats, in 1993 the Progressive Conservatives went from 151 seats to two, thus losing official party status.)

I've always said that Brian Mulroney did one honourable thing during this period: he called a referendum, thus establishing a convention that any significant constitutional reform requires a public referendum even though, ultimately, it is the premiers who formally sign the documents. And Canadians decisively voted "no" in the Charlottetown referendum. A few years later, in *To Match a Dream: A Practical Guide to Canada's Constitution*, a book I co-wrote with my then husband, Michael Valpy, we summed it up this way: "Contrary to Brian Mulroney's prediction — and that of many others who misunderstood the country — Canada did not fall apart when the Charlottetown accord was defeated. Its political face, however, changed. Canadians made it clear they no longer wanted to talk about the Constitution. Economic and social uncertainties in Canada were far too pressing and had been neglected by the politicians with their constitutional obsession . . ."

11. Post Meech and Charlottetown

Getting back to work at Michael McCracken's Infrometrica Limited, I soon discovered the price of opposing the federal government's ambitions. The day after the referendum vote, I was scheduled to appear at the offices of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs for a meeting in which Infrometrica was involved. McCracken informed me that I was denied entry on the instructions of Mulroney's minister of consumer and corporate affairs, Michel Côté who, like his boss, was infuriated by my involvement in the "no" side. Both McCracken and I acknowledged that this reality made it increasingly difficult to do my work, so I left Infometrica by the summer of 1993.

About the same time, I published a short book, *Seven Fateful Challenges for Canada*. This was my attempt to return to focusing on Canada in the wider world, and once and for all set aside the divisive constitutional navel-gazing that had absorbed so much valuable political energy for half a decade. I had been particularly dismayed that the Charlottetown drama had so effectively eclipsed the groundbreaking June 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (the Rio Summit) and the emerging post-Cold War focus on environmental degradation and sustainable development.

The book was promoted as a "roadmap to a renewed Canada" and, in hindsight, most certainly foreshadowed my eventual entry into elected politics. It is almost eerie to see how the challenges that Canadians face today were so predictable 20 years ago, and how little progress has been made.

In language very similar to what I use today, I called on our leaders to

. . . draw us beyond the short term and make us think about how the world is changing and how irresistible forces are sweeping us into a more cosmopolitan age. They must then be able to transmit a vision of Canada to Canadians, a description of the projects we must accomplish together, and an understanding of how we can reconcile a strong national government with sensitivity to community and regional concerns. The role of government may be different in an age of globalization, but it is no less important if we are to avoid the emergence of a neglected underclass, permanently underemployed, and living at the margins of an increasingly uncivil and unjust society.

But as a mother with a young child, elected politics was still over the horizon for me. After the crushing defeat of the Progressive Conservatives and the election of Jean Chrétien in October 1993, and despite decidedly mixed feelings about my role in the demise of the Meech and Charlottetown accords on the part of many Liberals around Chrétien, I succeeded in obtaining a job as a policy analyst at the National Liberal Caucus Research Bureau. My work involved helping members of the caucus on issues ranging from fiscal federalism to the redesigning of federal social security programs.

I left the National Liberal Caucus Research Bureau in the spring of 1995 to move to Toronto. Preoccupied with a new marriage, my young daughter, and the impending arrival of my son, I watched the 1995 Quebec referendum with interest but from the sidelines. (The newly created federal separatist party, the Bloc Québécois, led by former Conservative cabinet minister Lucien Bouchard, managed to perpetuate a new myth that Quebec had been rebuffed in its attempt at constitutional change, despite the fact that Quebecers themselves rejected the Charlottetown accord in the referendum.) The 1995 referendum was the second time Quebecers had been asked to vote on whether the province should secede from Canada and become an independent state. This time the proposal was softened a little from sovereignty with an option to establish a “partnership” with Canada to the new concept of “sovereignty-association.” On October 30, Quebecers voted “no” by a narrow margin of 50.58 percent.

My most political act that year was donating my extensive papers, correspondence, and other Meech and Charlottetown materials to the National Archives for historians to mine, which also saved them from the mould in the decaying basement of my rented home. Still, I was very conscious of the failure of the federal side to make a strong and unequivocal case for Canada. There was a real need for someone to clearly articulate the national interest and inspire Canadians to work together. My “one Canada” concept, which would be fully developed by the time I decided to run for the Liberal leadership in 2012–13, was coming together in my mind.

In late 1997, I was appointed a member in the Toronto division of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), an independent administrative tribunal responsible for making fair-minded decisions on immigration and refugee matters. (A “member,” sometimes a lawyer, is the individual who makes decisions on IRB cases.)

My work on the IRB, especially on the refugee side, was eye-opening. I began in 1998 on the China team, dealing with claims primarily from one province in southern China. With experience and time, it became increasingly easier to identify the very small number of obviously unfounded claims, and I grew to understand the human dynamics behind the many desperate people trying to gain entry to Canada from all over the world. In one case, a young man fled for his life from an authoritarian regime in Eastern Europe. After taking train connections to the south of Spain, he managed to hide in the lifeboat of a tanker ship bound for Halifax. When it arrived, he dived into Halifax Harbour, was picked up, and made a claim for refugee status. I carefully considered his story, decided it was credible, and granted him convention refugee status.

By 2000, I had moved to Ottawa with Sarah and Matthew, where I continued my work with the IRB Ottawa office. I was astonished to discover that in a case regarding a young man fleeing persecution in Syria, our diplomatic officials had contacted Syrian authorities to find out the veracity of his story. That, in and of itself, put the young man in mortal danger and supported an immediate finding that would make him a convention refugee, leading to asylum. (The short-sighted actions of our people astounded me; but the same naïveté about the true nature of Syrian authorities was evident when Canadian officials provided information to the U.S. officials who had detained Maher Arar, an engineer with dual Canadian and Syrian passports, that resulted in Arar, an innocent man, being sent to Syria, where he was held for a year and tortured.)

I was told I had a reputation within the Ottawa immigration bar as an IRB member who was fair, with a “no bullshit” approach, especially with respect to such fundamental matters as firmly establishing one’s identity. I became convinced that we should combine the two separate processes: the determination of convention refugee status with the less stringent assessment of whether humane and compassionate considerations might nevertheless justify letting a failed refugee claimant stay in Canada. Unfortunately, subsequent Conservative governments have gone in the opposite direction and, in the process, diminished Canada’s hard-earned reputation as a beacon of hope and principle in the world.

Sadly, Pierre’s health began to fail seriously in 2000. Our last visits together included short stays with Sarah and Matthew in the summers of 1998 and 1999 at the chalet in Morin Heights, a trip alone with Sarah for a lunch in Montreal in the summer of 2000, and a final goodbye during the last two weeks of his life. To the end, Pierre remained very kind but distant with Sarah; the role of loving father was for his sons. To her great credit, Sarah understood the unique nature of her parents’ relationship and the limited contact with her father, and took it all in stride remarkably well. Pierre died on September 28, 2000, and at his funeral, Sarah and I sat in the family pew alongside Sacha, Justin, and Margaret. We all walked in the solemn cortège accompanying the flag-draped casket down the steps of Montreal’s City Hall on its way to Notre-Dame Basilica. It was an excruciatingly sad time. Sarah had lost her father, and I had lost my kindred spirit.

12. One Canada for All Canadians

As the only one of my siblings living in Ottawa during the early 2000s I, like so many Canadians, had assumed responsibility for overseeing my aging parents’ well-being in addition to raising my own family. My mother died in 2002, my father in 2005.

It wasn’t just my little world that had been shaken up over those years. The shock of 9/11 had stunned the entire western world and, in my view, made even more urgent the need for bold national leadership to make Canada a constructive participant in the critical areas requiring global coordination, from security to the environment. As I gradually emerged from the fog of family responsibilities and looked at national politics again, I saw confusion and disarray at the federal level, particularly within the governing Liberal Party. The Chrétien-Martin succession was extraordinarily divisive, consuming vast stores of valuable political energy that should have been focused on creating a collaborative and cooperative federation. The decision of the provincial premiers to create an inter-provincial Council of the Federation to more effectively lobby Ottawa about their concerns rang alarm bells for me. As I looked more closely, there was too little progress on too many fronts. One dramatic example: the failure to follow through on and expand the 1995 federal-provincial Agreement on Internal Trade, to once and for all strengthen our internal economic union within Canada and break down the myriad of barriers to the free movement of people, goods, services, and investment across our country.

With so many ideas and so much I thought I could offer, I returned to my long-held ambition to enter politics. At first, I looked into the Ottawa riding of West Nepean, since the Liberal

incumbent was preparing to resign. Although I was urged to run so there would “be a race,” I declined after finding out that the incumbent had passed off the riding to a long-time friend and ally.

Looking into other possibilities, I saw that no one wanted the nomination to run against Jack Layton in the Toronto-Danforth riding when long-time former Liberal MP Dennis Mills decided not to run again. I was nominated in November 2005, one week before the Conservatives, led by Stephen Harper and supported by the NDP and Bloc Québécois, introduced a motion of non-confidence, forcing Paul Martin to call the 2006 federal election. (At first I commuted from Ottawa to Toronto, then moved to Toronto with my children in the summer of 2006.)

The election campaign was a fascinating experience. Layton had been NDP leader at that point for three years, spending most of his time in Ottawa. So while he had a high profile, he hadn't been able to focus much attention on the riding. At the time, a writer for blogTO wrote: “You would think the leader of the NDP would be a shoe-in to be re-elected. Not so, according to many election watchers. Seems like Jack Layton might have a tough go of it to overcome Liberal challenger Deborah Coyne in the Toronto-Danforth riding. At least one odds-maker has this pegged at coming down to less than a 3,000 vote differential.” That turned out to be overly optimistic but, in the end, I took 34 percent of the vote to Layton's 48 percent and gave the Liberals a respectable showing.

In 2008, rather than run against Jack Layton again, I sought the nomination for the Toronto riding of Don Valley West, where popular Liberal MP John Godfrey was stepping aside. In the end, though, I decided to withdraw and support the nomination of the establishment candidate, Rob Oliphant. I found the campaign financially challenging and decided I should spend my time focusing on my work as an independent public policy analyst. From October 2009 to February 2012, much of my time was spent as a part-time member on Ontario's Health Professions Appeal and Review Board and the Health Insurance Appeal and Review Board.

My experience running as a Liberal taught me something, though. In speeches at that time, I often said what I still believe today, that the Liberal Party has been responsible for building the most cosmopolitan and multiethnic society in human history. It is indeed the party of Medicare, the Canada Pension Plan, the Canadian flag, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But I also became conscious that for some time the Liberal Party no longer represented something really distinctive in the eyes of the Canadian public. Today, if you ask people on the street to define a Conservative, they'll say, “Oh yeah, we know what a Conservative is.” And they'll tell you. If you ask people what the NDP stands for, they'll say, “We know what NDP means.” But if you ask them about a Liberal, they won't have much sense of who we are.

That's why, back in 2008, I established a website and blog called Canadians Without Borders. I wanted to encourage and contribute to a public debate among Canadians about what we share; what it means to be Canadian when so many of us come from all over the world; what we, as Canadians, want to accomplish together. I believe we need to have a national voice that

is clear, coherent, and principled. But to have that we must have bold, visionary, national leadership and a more collaborative and collegial federalism.

It took the devastating collapse of the Liberals in 2011 to permit a sclerotic party to open itself to people like me, who have a genuine interest in engaging Canadians in a debate about the future of our country. So, on June 27, 2012, I decided to seek the leadership of the party and create a website (<http://www.deborahcoyne.ca/>) to promote *One Canada for All Canadians* and to document my ideas, policies, and activities. I am determined to see whether, in our age of instant and virtually costless communication, it is possible to do politics differently, to run a relatively frugal campaign of substance, uncluttered by spin and manipulation. (This reminds me of Bill Clinton at the 2012 Democratic convention talking about cutting through the cynicism by having adult conversations with voters.) It's no longer all about an obsession with partisan political agendas. A renewed Liberal Party will only be as strong as its links to civil society, encouraging and connecting with all those powerful, grassroots groups of people committed to ending homelessness, protecting the environment, advocating for world peace, and in many other ways truly engaged in strengthening Canada's reputation at home and abroad.

I'm not naive about the tactics that may be pursued by others, especially members of the ruling Conservative party, but I have full confidence in the ability of the Canadian people to distinguish between the authentic and the phony.

That's why I was pleased to see a reference to me on the site Progressive Bloggers, a bipartisan group who believe in a coalition of like-minded people, whether Liberal, NDP, Red Tory, or Green, moving Canadian politics into the future. On November 23, 2012, one blogger wrote: "Deborah Coyne . . . has already released more fresh ideas than we've seen from Stephen Harper during his entire tenure as Prime Minister."

I know many people get it. There is a different way to approach politics.

I still draw inspiration from that trip I took to Washington with my daughter, Sarah, to see Jon Stewart's and Stephen Colbert's "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear." It took two political satirists to bring together a quarter of a million people to an anti-rally rally against the highjacking of the political system by elites that effectively shut out ordinary people. It was a political event that never endorsed a politician, just the idea that the citizenry can, and should, take control of the political narrative. There was a lot of humour but, in his closing speech, Stewart stuck a more serious tone when he said, "We know instinctively as a people that if we are to get through the darkness and back into the light, we have to work together."

That is, in fact, what draws me to political life, the idea of helping to bring people together, something that I have always strived to do. Even the all-volunteer team I've assembled for the Liberal leadership race includes former colleagues from various organizations for which I worked, former law students, people I have helped over the years, and citizens who backed my Meech or Charlottetown efforts.

But consider the big picture: what brings all of us together here in Canada if it's not ethnicity, religion, language, or other traditional markers of national unity? Is it a common sense of

tolerance? No, it can't be. People are not knocking on Canada's doors because we are tolerant. Our welcome mat doesn't say, "You're welcome to come here and as long as you don't bother anyone, no one will bother you." Tolerance isn't an end in itself. We owe each other more than tolerance.

Canadians, new and old, do not define ourselves by ethnicity, religion, language, or province in which we live. Nor do we define ourselves by material things: the make of cars we drive, the size of houses we own, the prestige of our postal codes. We don't define ourselves with borders.

Canadians choose Canada because of the opportunities, both economic and social. This country represents the best of universal values — justice, equality, diversity, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, equal rights, non-discrimination, and a chance to live in peace and humanity. Canada provides a safe haven and a base from which to reach out to the troubled areas of the world and teach what we have learned here: how to live together peaceably, compassionately, and respectfully, exercising the mutual responsibilities that go along with the rights of citizenship.

In the lead-up to the 2011 election and then after, Sarah regularly asked whether or not I would be running as a Liberal candidate again. I told her that I'd been looking at ridings, but if I didn't find one that was available and seemed realistic for me, I might consider running for the Liberal leadership. Sarah was always fully supportive and a source of great encouragement for me. Historically, I told her, our vision of a strong national government found a home in the Liberal Party of Canada. Perhaps neither that vision nor the party will survive. Nothing is immortal. But they will either rise, or continue to fall, together. That's why it's so important for like-minded Canadians not to leave the future of Canada only to political actors in Ottawa. We all need to come together, forum by forum, riding by riding, to fight for nothing less than the soul of our nation.

That's why I've always thought that our leaders need to be poets, not merely pollsters. To inspire people to give as much of themselves as they ask of their governments.

Spending time with Sarah and her friends in Washington reminded me that a new generation is focused on the world, not on borders, and not on the parochial and the tired debates of petty politics. I share with them the vision of a Canada that attracts newcomers from all over the world, and that has such tremendous potential to be a great nation. We have extraordinary and expanding human energy; it's time to embrace fully what we can do as a country and as a people.

It is time to build one Canada for all Canadians: a powerhouse of prosperity, sustainable living, and social justice.

If all of us work together, I believe Canada will thrive.