

Unilateral move 'frightening' - MP

By JIM MACDONALD
Herald Special
Unilateral action on the constitution by the federal government is a "frightening prospect," Brampton-Georgetown MP John McDermid says.

It would frighten him that a federal government which doesn't have broad support across the country "would take that type of action". His comments come in the wake of last week's first minister's conference which collapsed without any agreement

on constitutional change. Mr. McDermid said in an interview it would be "extremely dangerous" for the government to patriate the constitution without an amending formula. That could leave constitutional change to the whim of a

Liberal government which has little support outside Ontario and Quebec, he said. The Conservative politician said he was "very disappointed" at the outcome of the week-long conference. "I think most Canadians were disappointed," he said. "I was hoping they would, at a minimum establish an amending formula and in that way pave the way for patriation."

anything. "I was sure hoping they'd get at least one thing done," he said. Mr. McDermid was also upset that a federal strategy paper, outlining possible unilateral action by Ottawa, was leaked at the beginning of the conference. "That kind of stuff should have been locked up in a safe," said Mr. McDermid, who agreed his public release undermined the conference. Some cynics believe the paper was leaked on purpose, he noted. "It does look very sus-

picious at times," Mr. McDermid admitted. Mr. McDermid suggested governments should take "a bit of a rest" from the constitution to "rethink and regroup" for a future meeting. For now, governments should concentrate on other serious issues, such as the economy, he said. "There are more pressing problems at the present time," he said.

Most Canadians agree, according to Mr. McDermid. He said only five people in the past few months contacted him about the constitution. He said he gets that many calls in 20 minutes when there is a postal problem.

Jelinek heads west

Canada's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport will take Halton MP Otto Jelinek through the four western provinces this week in search of possible solutions to various transportation problems and freight rates said to be plaguing that part of the country. Government and corporate officials in a number of cities will be interviewed.

MP starts work hearings

Brampton-Georgetown MP John McDermid will take his Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities before the public in November in the hope of obtaining input on federal manpower programs and related topics, particularly from specialists in industry, labor, education and human resources. The Toronto public hearings follow a series of meetings in Ottawa in July attended by many national research-oriented groups.

'Get province's help,' majority tells Jelinek

Brampton-Georgetown MP John McDermid may not have been voicing party opinion last week when he challenged the prime minister's right to act alone in amending Canada's Constitution (Conservative leader Joe Clark suggested the opposite two days later), but fellow Tory Otto Jelinek has discovered substantial opposition to any unilateral move by the Liberal government. Mr. Jelinek, whose Halton riding includes Acton, announced the results of a summer questionnaire last week distributed among constituents. Nearly 62 per cent of those polled, he reported, oppose unilateral amendment of the Constitution without guidance from the provinces. More than 75 per cent indicated that any amendments should have provincial guidance. Overall, 83.1 per

cent favor the British North America Act's return to Canada from its current "home" in Britain. Through other questions, Mr. Jelinek found that a majority of constituents believe the federal government should have more power over the provinces. While 57.3 per cent are dissatisfied with the current balance of power, 51.2 per cent favor increasing federal powers and 33.6 per cent oppose the idea. Another 44.4 per cent, on the other hand, would like to see provincial authority enhanced further. Mr. Jelinek also took the opportunity to poll voters on the mortgage and property tax credit proposed by the former Clark government. Should the Trudeau government introduce such a program now, he asked? About 60 per cent feel it should. Other questionnaire re-

sponses: Should all economic, sporting and artistic ties with the Soviet Union be broken until Soviet troops are withdrawn from Afghanistan? Yes: 71.2 per cent; No: 24.4 per cent. Do you favor the reinstatement of capital punishment for first-degree premeditated murder? Yes: 82.3 per cent; No: 15.6 per cent. What is the most important issue facing Canada today? Inflation - 47.1 per cent; the Constitution - 3.5 per cent; Energy - 14.3 per cent; National Unity - 12.1 per cent; Unemployment - 9 per cent; Law and order - 8.1 per cent; Interest rates - 1.2 per cent; Bilingualism - 2 per cent; Others (government spending, environment protection, armed services, immigration, etc.) - 4.5 per cent.

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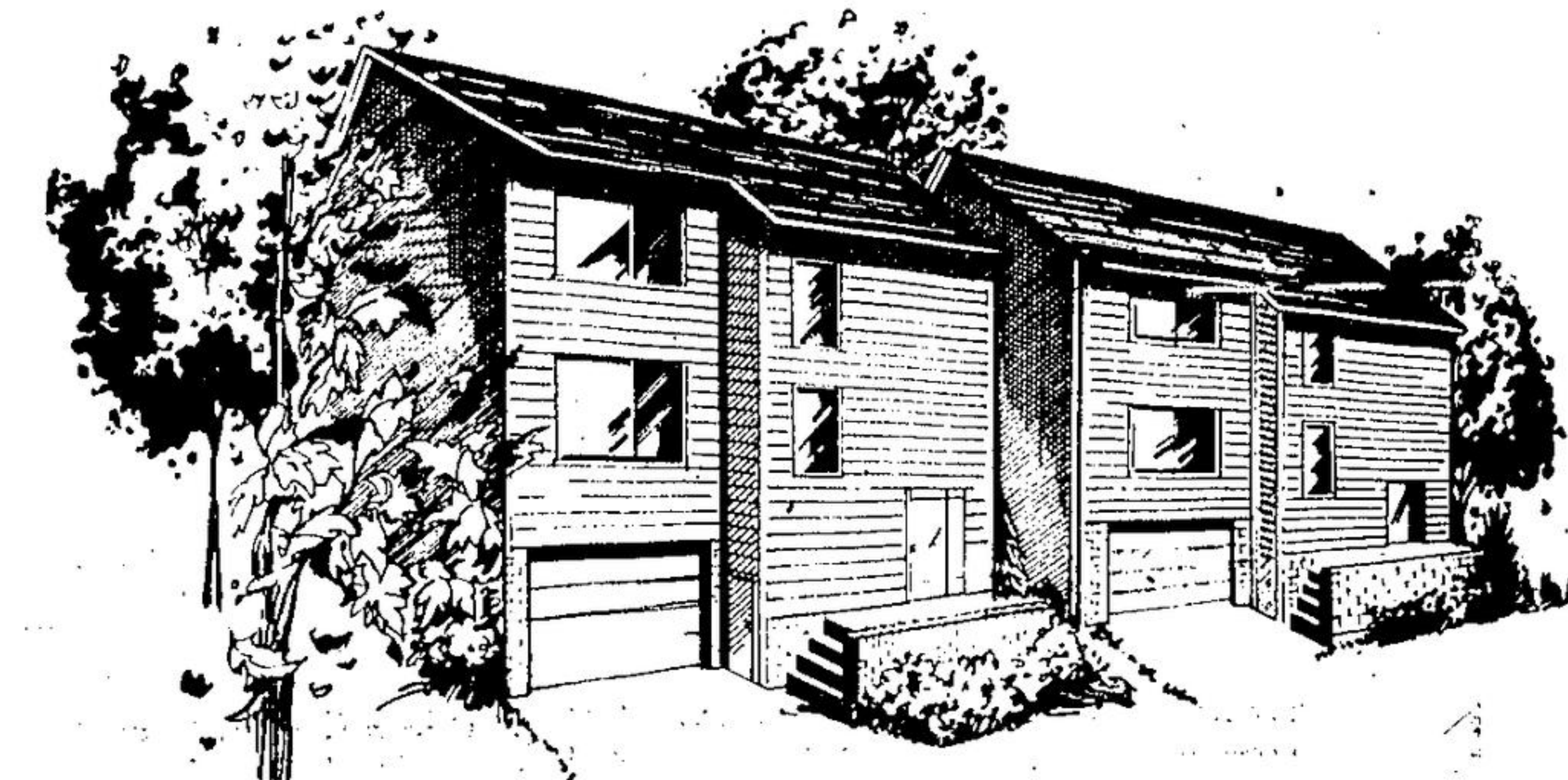
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