

Government Orders

This working group develops a strategy, an action plan for the negotiation and takes responsibility for implementing the plan in the communities which fall within the traditional territories. It is extremely important to realize that these people must have an awareness of the communities in question. The model they might introduce to a community like Nanaimo may not be exactly the same as the one they might introduce in a community like Powell River. They must have a knowledge and understanding of the people involved in each of the communities. What are the concerns in that community? What are the things people are saying in coffee shops? What are they saying on the reserves?

• (1340)

What kind of reaction are we getting to things we have already done? What kind of feedback are we getting from the major players from what we have done in the past? All of this has to be taken into consideration in making a global perception of the community where we are going to present this information package, or become involved in a process with the three partners and other members of the community.

A variety of initiatives have been implemented throughout the province. Some examples of programs include resource centres being established for the community at large on the sunshine coast, in Kelowna and in the Cariboo—Chilcotin area. These will be located in the local libraries.

The libraries will be provided with a set of three binders. One contains all information pertaining to the treaty negotiation process. I have not seen the binder, but I am hoping that the instructions regarding process are clean, clear, concise and understandable. The second contains all information specific to the negotiations being carried out in that community. The third contains all documentation pertaining to the local consultation process.

Newspaper supplements are being produced in Kelowna, Prince George and Williams Lake. These will be inserted into local newspapers to provide the widest distribution of information about the negotiations to the community. Extra copies will be produced for use as handout material at public events.

Open houses are held from time to time in each negotiation area to allow the public to informally meet with negotiators to discuss matters relating to the negotiations. This is dynamic because there is no set formula or schedule, but when the need arises within a community for an open house it materializes.

This is extremely important because when the emotions rise, you must strike when the iron is hot. If the people are really agitated and very concerned about some issue, they should have an open house as quickly as possible if that is a strategy that they feel is going to be the most effective in giving the information to all parties concerned.

A local organized public forum has been held in Prince Rupert. These forums involve not only negotiators, but also members of the community to discuss issues in depth. The forums are normally taped by the local community cable television stations and rebroadcast. We are very fortunate that often the local community television stations will rebroadcast some of these events two, three or four times at different times of the day to make sure they hit the various listening audiences that are available at that time.

Information about negotiations is often made available through other public events. For example, in the north, information booths have been set up at annual trade shows, giving negotiators wide exposure to those attending the show. Another example was the information booth set up for the Burrard negotiations at weekend canoe races and at a shopping mall as part of a week long native heritage days event.

Those are some examples, but I could go on and on because the human mind is a very creative thing. If you take the tethers off the human mind and allow it to be free to create, you will find that the individuals concerned will come up with a multitude of strategies on how to share information with each and every concerned person.

The working groups are also actively seeking opportunities for negotiators to speak to community groups, such as chambers of commerce, municipal councils, unions, churches and business groups. All of these activities involve a media component. The working groups have developed networks with the local media and keep them informed, as well as seeking specific opportunities for negotiators to be interviewed by reporters and appear on radio talk shows.

An important aspect of public information work at the local level is developing partnerships and alliances with community groups. Efforts are under way on a continuing basis to develop linkages with educational institutions, business associations and community organizations in an attempt to encourage ongoing dialogue with the communities.

• (1345)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to tell the hon. member that his time has expired. Perhaps there will be more in questions and comments.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am inclined to agree with the member who as I understood it stated that we cannot have a true settlement unless the grassroots are consulted.

The inference I took was that he was saying the grassroots at the aboriginal level should be consulted. This is not a criticism; I am just stating that I was not at all clear as to whether he also believed as I do that there must be a full consultation process at the grassroots level with the non-aboriginal community as well and that they must be involved in the process.