

*Government Orders*

Bill C-60 provides that any claims by the members of the First Nation that are not already settled by acceptance of the payments to individuals be directed to the continuing compensation fund. It will ensure that both the Government of Canada and the First Nation are protected from any such claims.

The second objective to be achieved by Bill C-60 is to stipulate that the moneys paid to the Pictou Landing Micmac under the final agreement will not be considered Indian moneys as defined by the Indian Act.

This benefits the federal government because it releases the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from any responsibility for managing these moneys. In these times of fiscal restraint the department should avoid taking on administrative functions that can and should be performed by First Nations.

This provision of Bill C-60 benefits the First Nation because it will ensure that the Pictou Landing Micmac have complete control over their compensation dollars. This would not be possible if the moneys were considered Indian moneys as defined pursuant to the Indian Act.

This is one of the most important provisions of this bill. I have said this government is committed to fulfilling its obligations to aboriginal people. Beyond just fulfilling commitments, we want to build a new partnership, a partnership based on trust, mutual respect and participation in the decision making process.

This provision of Bill C-60 is a step toward making this goal a reality. Management of their own funds affords First Nations opportunities to chart their own course for economic development.

I am confident that my constituents, the Pictou Landing Micmac, like many First Nations across the country will prosper. The government recognizes that the untapped potential of aboriginal people is untapped for Canada. In a small way the development opportunities afforded by the provision of Bill C-60 open the door to potential.

The projects already borne from this settlement like the Pictou Landing economic development promotional package are just the beginning, a beginning not only for the First Nation but for other communities in Pictou County and in Nova Scotia as a whole.

Implementation of the Boat Harbour agreement has been proceeding well with no significant problems encountered by either party to the agreement. Nevertheless, the settlement agreement does require Canada to explore ways that might yield a solution to the environmental problem that now exists at Boat Harbour.

Toward this end several federal departments are facilitating and working with the Pictou Landing Micmac and other concerned parties to achieve the rehabilitation of Boat Harbour.

I want to advise hon. members in this House that the federal government is committed to ensuring that the clean-up of Boat Harbour meets Canada's high environmental standards. This proposed legislation will have no impact on this process.

As a party to the final agreement, the Pictou Landing Micmac have clearly indicated that they want and expect this legislation to be enacted.

● (1125)

To ensure that Bill C-60 meets with this understanding in the settlement agreement the First Nation was consulted during the drafting of the legislation. Members of the First Nation are now awaiting Parliament's decision. In making that decision I would ask my hon. colleagues to keep the crown's honour in mind.

I would ask them to remember that this legislation is the product of a clear and genuine commitment which was made at the request of the Pictou Landing Micmac more than a year ago. I would remind them that the government's word was accepted by the First Nation in good faith despite the problems it has endured over the past 25 years.

It is time to put the unfinished business behind us so that the First Nations and the federal government's energy can be devoted to building for the future rather than rectifying past mistakes. We can and must do so by giving our unanimous support to Bill C-60.

Therefore, as the member of Parliament for Central Nova I ask on behalf of my constituents, the Micmac First Nations people, for unanimous support from this honourable House for Bill C-60.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, let me tell you right away that the Bloc Québécois will be supporting this bill. As usual, I will try and explain the Micmac reality. I think it is important to give a little background because the Micmac Nation has always been recognized as a fishing nation living for the most part by rivers, lagoons or the sea.

Many people wonder about the meaning of the word "Micmac". In fact, there are two: "a nation and its language", and "my family and friends". When I travelled just recently to the Restigouche reserve, which by the way is called Listuguj, whatever meaning you give to the word Micmac, what I saw and experienced on the reserve of which Chief Miller is the worthy representative confirms that both meanings perfectly describe the reality as I experienced it on this reserve.

I saw people bound by very strong ties of friendship. Families form a very tightly knit fabric. Micmacs are also very proud of their language. In fact, they make a point of promoting the Micmac language in schools. Micmacs have traditionally been very close to their roots and accorded great importance to their culture.