

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni):** A supplementary. The Prime Minister promised to reconsider his government's comprehensive claims policy which most people acknowledge as a key factor in the Mohawk's grievance. Will he take the advice of the Coolican report and the Canadian Bar Association and recognize aboriginal title in a new claims policy? Will he introduce legislation to create an independent aboriginal claims commission? What is the Prime Minister prepared to do to prove his offers were made in good faith and are not yet another set of empty promises to aboriginal people?

**Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, the record of achievement of this government on behalf of aboriginal people is far and away more generous and has advanced the cause of aboriginal people far more than any previous government in the history of this country. We appreciate the discussions, the important contributions made yesterday and by aboriginal leaders. We will continue to develop these programs in consultation with aboriginal people.

**Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister of Canada with regard to his broad, sweeping statements made yesterday to accelerate the comprehensive land claims process.

No specific commitment to changing the outdated claims policy, which is very divisive, was made. This is viewed as being another empty promise. The extinguishment policy which I referred to violates the fiduciary responsibility the government has for aboriginal peoples.

I ask the Prime Minister, will he make a commitment here and now to abolish this destructive extinguishment clause in the comprehensive land claims policy?

**Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I know how deeply the hon. member is concerned about the cause of aboriginal people and the nature of the comprehensive claims policy. We will have ample opportunity to further the discussions which were held in this House these past 24 hours with members of the various caucuses and parties. I will be personally examining many of the fine contributions that were made here in these important debates.

**Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic):** Mr. Speaker, since I have not received an answer to my question, I redirect this question to the Prime Minister. My supplementary is to the Prime Minister.

If he does want to reintroduce the dignity and trust he spoke of into the process of consultation and negotiation of such items as comprehensive land claims, will he commit to this House and aboriginal groups to changing the outdated land claims policy by accommodating the Penner and Coolican reports on the abolishment of the extinguishment policy here and now today. Yes or no.

**Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I was present in the House, as was the hon. member, when the Prime Minister indicated that one of our most significant priorities would be to deal with the claims process in terms of specific claims, in terms of the treaty land entitlements which have not been fulfilled and in terms of changes to the comprehensive claims policy which would allow us to expedite the processing of these claims.

I ask the hon. member to show some trust and confidence that we will be able to make these changes, as the Prime Minister has promised.

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[Translation]

**IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard):** In the absence of the Minister of Immigration, Mr. Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of State for Employment and Immigration and Minister of State for Seniors.

Figures indicate that federal funds for teaching French to immigrants have decreased by 17 per cent in the last year while the number of immigrants has gone up by 12 per cent during the same time.

Mr. Speaker, some immigrants have to wait up to five months before being able to register for French lessons. Can the minister explain why the government cannot make this program more readily accessible to immigrants who need to learn French to make their transition into their chosen society that much easier?

**Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for this question