

remains the forum where the Canadian government will negotiate with the band council in order to consider and resolve the community's other concerns.

Colleagues will recall that one of the main causes of the dispute in the summer of 1990 was the Mohawk claim to land known as the pines. The land was part of a municipal park and was adjacent to a municipal golf course which the municipality was planning to expand. This land was not for sale and up to that point the municipality had no intention of parting with it. In order to address the issue we have sought innovative solutions.

Last month the Minister of State announced details of the federal proposal aimed at resolving certain concerns of the residents of Oka and Kanesatake regarding lands. Under the proposal, the government is recommending the purchase of property south of highway 344 which will be exchanged with the municipality of the village of Oka for wooded land belonging to the municipality located west of the existing golf course and which was at the heart of the 1990 conflict.

This constitutes a fair and equitable solution likely to satisfy all parties involved. On the one hand, Mohawks will obtain land situated in the pines which are of great cultural importance; on the other hand, the municipality of the village of Oka will take possession of land which it could use to benefit the community. The initiative is one which is very likely to advance the issue of land unification at Kanesatake.

It is essential that the land at Kanesatake be continuous and not contain any enclaves. Only a few examples exist of aboriginal land that is so spread out. This type of land configuration makes both community living and economic development difficult. Joining the pines to the land already acquired by this federal government is in step with unification of this land.

Among the key elements of the proposal of the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau is the creation of a body that would be responsible for informing the entire population, native and non-native, of the federal government's plans on all issues of interest to the two communities, principally that of land acquisitions.

I would join colleagues on both sides of the House in applauding the recent announcement by the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau concerning the establishment of the federal information office in Oka-Ka-

nesatake. The presence of an office such as this in the community will contribute significantly to improving relations between the region's native and non-native communities.

The office will fulfil two objectives of the federal government. First, Public Works Canada officers need a location to conduct business when they are discussing purchases with land owners. Second, a liaison officer will be on site to inform all parties concerned of the advances being made by the government in the land unification project.

This information will be provided once a decision has been made at the negotiating table. Certain segments of the population of Kanesatake have called for the office to be closed. Following discussions the band council agrees that the government should act openly and promptly with the residents of both communities on the land issue. We believe that this office can play an important role in this regard. It must therefore remain open and proceed with its mandate.

• (1150)

In conclusion, after hearing this brief overview, I am sure colleagues will agree that significant progress has been made on the Oka-Kanesatake issue. But negotiations currently under way must continue. There must be no new delays; the entire population is calling for action. People in the area are anxious for the land unification project to be completed, as this will end the cloud of uncertainty hanging over the community.

The government has made a commitment to move ahead while taking into consideration the interests of aboriginal peoples and non-aboriginals in the region. We must continue in the direction in which we started. The future of an entire region of Quebec and Canada is at stake.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Charles-Eugène Marin (Gaspé):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the proposal presented by the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau, especially since I was astonished when I heard the hon. member for Western Arctic accuse my colleague of having a conflict of interest. That is the kind of comment which since 1990 and shortly before has led to the endless wrangling that has been going on in the area. I would have expected the hon. member for Western