

*Government Orders*

on July 5, 1993. The final agreement was signed on July 20, 1993. That was under the previous administration.

• (1205)

The final agreement provides that the band gives Canada a release from responsibility and liability for past, present and future effects related to the Boat Harbour effluent treatment system in exchange for compensation to the Pictou Landing band. As I mentioned previously, the total compensation was \$35 million of which the band received \$28 million at the end of April 1994 and will receive the remainder in April 1995.

The one outstanding question in my mind is: What has taken so long to bring the bill forward? I have asked the question and I have yet to receive a satisfactory answer.

There are two critical issues addressed in the legislation. First it will ensure that all future claims by members of the First Nations in that area will be directed to an established fund that the bill provides. This means that no further claims can be made against the crown in this instance. This is critical to me and my party. We therefore are satisfied with that arrangement.

Second, Bill C-60 provides that the Pictou Landing Micmac band is responsible for managing and disseminating the settlement money provided, a total of \$35 million, \$20 million of which will go to pay out claims to the band and to individual members. The remainder, \$15 million, shall be used to pay band members to relocate should it become necessary. Once the allotment has been used, the band has no further recourse against the crown for further financial compensation.

Having addressed the two operative principles of the bill, I want to add that it is my hope the \$20 million will help deliver the band to self-sufficiency. We feel that every agreement the government signs should ultimately bring more self-sufficiency to the band.

The Reform Party supports the conclusion of outstanding claims. The Pictou claim is a consequence of the non-fulfilment by the government of an obligation arising from the improper administration of reserve lands by the department. This breach of fiduciary responsibility and duty has now been settled.

I am confident members of the Pictou band will manage this settlement responsibly and I wish them well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.)

• (1210)

**FIREARMS ACT**

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, may I say that I consider it a privilege to lead off debate at second reading on this important piece of legislation and to urge the House to adopt the legislation in principle before sending it to the standing committee for detailed consideration.

If I may, I would propose to begin my treatment of the legislation today by speaking about matters of principle that motivate the government in preparing and presenting this legislation: objectives, ideals and values.

The government suggests that the object of the regulation of firearms should be the preservation of the safe, civilized and peaceful nature of Canada.

While there are many reasons we respect and admire our neighbours to the south and value our unique relationship with them, there are also aspects of the American way of life that we see as very different from what we want for ourselves. Perhaps chief among them is the way in which firearms are regulated and used.

It is said that there are over 200 million firearms in private ownership in the United States of America, including tens of millions of handguns, with varying levels of regulation, but generally in a context in which the private use of firearms is acknowledged, recognized and even in some places encouraged including for self-protection.

It seems to me and to the government that we do not want that for ourselves. We do not want to live in a country in which people feel they want or need to possess a firearm for protection. That is the first principle we take as a guiding principle for the preparation of legislation in terms of the regulation of firearms.

A second principle is that if we are to retain our safe and peaceful character as a country we should signal in every possible way that we will not tolerate and we will severely punish the use of firearms in the commission of crime. Those who take up a firearm to threaten others, to rob or to assault must know that by choosing to use a firearm they are making an important decision about a large part of the rest of their lives. The punishment must be certain and must be significant.

Those who smuggle guns, those who traffic in illegal firearms, those who profit by putting guns into the hands of criminals must know that the penalties for such misconduct will be swift and will be certain. That is the second principle we take as governing or guiding the preparation of legislation as it relates to firearms.