

the incident in Oka. The events of the whole summer could have been prevented if the Government of Canada had recalled Parliament.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I rise today to participate in this debate on the report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs entitled *Unfinished Business*.

I very much enjoyed this report. I recall in 1984, just after I first came to Parliament, that I served on that standing committee. I know the good work that was done during that time when Mr. Penner was involved with that committee. I am very pleased that good work is continuing that good work under the chair of the hon. member for Macleod.

There is just one paragraph in the report that deals with aboriginal women. The committee indicates that the Native Women's Association was unable to appear during the set of hearings that led up to this report, but it indicates that it is aware of some of the issues aboriginal women would wish to discuss. Certainly in other areas of the report it talked about child care, housing, and education, issues which I know the Aboriginal Women's Association would have brought to the committee's attention.

I would like to discuss some of those issues, some of the government's response, and some of our initiatives to deal with those issues.

However, before I move on to that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to comment on a remark made a bit earlier by the hon. member for Comox—Alberni who opened this debate. He indicated that he felt that other than the motion which was put on the floor and debated on Tuesday of this week, there really had not been anything substantive or specific about what this government's actions were with respect to aboriginal people in this country.

I would beg to disagree. This week in almost every Question Period I think there have been questions raised on issues arising either specifically out of the situation at Oka and Kahnawake or broader issues about Indian land claims and self-government. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and other ministers who have responded have indicated their specific plans to proceed in a rapid and appropriate way to start to deal effectively with some of these issues. This was all

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predicated upon the peaceful resolution of the situation at Oka, one that we were pleased to see occur on Wednesday of this week.

The most important contribution to this over-all debate—and I am sure it is a contribution which in the minds of many Canadians has been vitally important in helping them think about these difficult issues—was a speech made by the Prime Minister on Tuesday, September 25. I remind members that the Prime Minister on that occasion did indeed set out a very specific agenda. He said:

The agenda I believe we ought to be addressing will have four main pillars: land claims, the economic and social conditions on reserves, the relationship between aboriginal peoples and governments, and concerns of Canada's aboriginal peoples in contemporary Canadian life.

He then went on and quite specifically talked about three initiatives in areas of land claims. Certainly the one that I am very pleased about, being a member from British Columbia, is that we will be abandoning the old style of only being able to deal with six land claims at a time. The largest number of outstanding land claims are in my province of British Columbia, and it has been very difficult to move ahead with them under the constraints of the old policy. I welcome the announcement and congratulate the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Prime Minister on it. That, along with the provinces' indication that they will be prepared to undertake joint discussions, I hope will mean that we will be able to move ahead substantially with land claims issues in British Columbia.

• (1350)

The other dimension that the Prime Minister talked about related to social conditions on reserves. All members who have had the opportunity of visiting reserves across this country know the variety of conditions. There are some that are excellent. I have in my own riding the Mount Currie community where the previous government and this government together provided the funds to establish basically a whole new community with very good housing and support services.

However, we know that is not the case in some parts of the country like northern Ontario. The Prime Minister's commitment that we were going to be working with the Indian leadership and the provincial governments on a range of improvements to basic community programs