

Government Orders

and our First Nations people and knowing more about their history and their culture. It is important that we understand what their culture is and try to work with it. If First Nations would understand our culture too, I believe that all in the community would be better served and business would be better served.

• (1635)

My comments are very short. It is only to create awareness, which in turn will give better understanding, which will lead to a resolution and hopefully, passage of Bill C-107.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I remind the House that we are presently at the last stage of debate on Bill C-107, in which members are entitled to a 10-minute maximum intervention without questions or comments.

Mr. John Murphy (Annapolis Valley—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-107. As a member of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, I know the importance of the bill. I will spend a few moments talking about the federal government's perspective on the B.C. treaty negotiations.

The federal government has a dual objective in entering into treaty negotiations: to achieve certainty as to the rights and obligations of all lands and resource users; and to establish a new relationship between First Nations and other citizens. It is important as Canada evolves to achieve a better relationship between our native people and the rest of Canadians.

The interests which Canada brings to the treaty negotiating table are outlined in the preliminary document dated June 27, 1995. This was prepared by the federal treaty negotiations office.

The Government of Canada has primary jurisdiction over issues such as financial benefits, governance and fisheries, while in other areas such as lands and wildlife it may exercise varying degrees of authority. Although the federal government does not have primary jurisdiction over all the topics which will be subject to negotiation, it has nevertheless declared its interest in every area. Overall, in concluding treaties in B.C., Canada's interest is ensuring that fairness, affordability, clarity and durability are present.

The federal government has also identified its specific interests in negotiating the key components of the treaty. Those key components are lands and resources, financial benefits and governance. Let me outline some of the key elements of each of these components.

In the area of lands and resources, we want to ensure the conservation of resources for the future use and benefit of all Canadians. We want to ensure that we promote and integrate a co-ordinated approach to land and resource management. We also want to identify and consult with all interested and affected third parties and deal with them equitably. We obviously have to

respect the legal rights of all of our citizens. The promotion of self-reliance of the First Nations is important and is one of the reasons I sit on the parliamentary committee. Last, with respect to lands and resources, we must safeguard Canada's over-arching obligations.

In the area of financial benefits, we want to ensure in concluding agreements that they are affordable for all Canadians. That is very important. I believe we can work together with all parties to make sure that happens. We also have to ensure that there is no burden to Canada's economy and taxpayers.

Most important, we must ensure there is fairness and equity among all the treaties concluded in B.C. and elsewhere in Canada. That is important for our government. We talked about that in our red book, that there be fairness and equity in all of our conclusions when we do these treaties. The last and most important one is promoting self-reliance in the First Nations communities.

• (1640)

The main elements in the area of governance are establishing new relationships with First Nations. That is an important element for us. We are always striving to do that. I am watching this happen more and more in my committee. We are looking at it in a subcommittee on education of which I am also a member. We are looking at how those new relationships can be built so that First Nations can take their proper roles in the country.

We want to establish clear and harmonious jurisdictional arrangements among all levels of government. We also want to maintain Canada's over-arching sovereignty and the application of the charter of rights and freedoms.

We must make sure that First Nations institutions of government are democratic and accountable. This is coming more and more into play. Our native people want to be more democratic and accountable for their ongoing performance in Canada.

We want to recognize the unique needs of various First Nations. That is very important as well. There are so many unique needs of our First Nations people. Through this treaty and this commission those needs, unique as they are, can be highlighted and accentuated.

The means whereby Canada will achieve its interests will be determined through extensive consultations with third parties and ultimately through a process of negotiations with the First Nations and British Columbia.

What is the vision for post-treaty British Columbia? The federal government has a vision for British Columbia after treaty negotiations have concluded with the province's First Nations. Canada seeks a society in which new relationships are forged with First Nations, a relationship obviously based on respect and trust, one that reconciles modern Canadian realities with the traditional native aspirations.