

I fully understand that land tenure is a big problem in Canada. However that is into the area of provincial jurisdiction. They are trying to put the horse before the cart. It has already taken place without the legislation passing through Parliament and I do not understand that either. Maybe you can answer some of my questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before I give the floor to the hon. member for Saskatoon—Dundurn, I remind members to direct questions and comments through the Chair.

Mr. Bodnar: Mr. Speaker it is nice to know that members of the third party recognize that this uncertainty is having an impact on industry in Canada. Hopefully, rather than being critical of what is being proposed, the third party will propose whatever it believes may be better. If its proposals are better we can discuss them.

It is interesting to note the land claims, overlapping claims and the problems with them. Of course it is voluntary and entrance is voluntary. However it is hoped that as we proceed the parties and other groups in British Columbia will see the process is working. Since it is voluntary, hopefully other groups that are somewhat reluctant will join the program.

A step has to be taken. We cannot throw our arms in the air and say that we have this problem but will do nothing about it. We cannot say that. We have to try to bring the matter to a resolution and help industry and people in the province of British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada bring the matter to a head. I just wish the hon. member had some constructive suggestions on how this matter could be dealt with if he is not happy with the process we have introduced.

• (1630)

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too am very pleased to speak to Bill C-107. This is a very important bill and is long overdue. However the understanding should be that we are now at this stage and let us get on with it.

Today marks the culmination of a long and at times very difficult struggle. It is born of British Columbia's history and is the product of many years of hard work and a lot of acrimonious debate.

The issue of aboriginal rights in B.C. has remained unresolved for years. The negotiation process has gone on for decades. Many people have played a part. Many times the negotiators did not understand the cultural differences they were dealing with.

My comments this afternoon will be very short. I will address only what one company in British Columbia has done to improve cross-cultural awareness which not only improves relations but improves business for all concerned.

Government Orders

Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people often work in the same circles in both the private and public sectors, yet the level of awareness across cultures is often lower than it should be. Misinformation about the culture and beliefs of First Nations can create tension within an office and across the boardroom table. This tension negatively impacts on interpersonal and business relations.

One of the best ways to increase knowledge about First Nations is through cross-cultural awareness training. An example of this is what I am going to speak about today.

B.C. Hydro is a leader in this field. Once B.C. Hydro realized the benefits of working with aboriginal peoples it developed the aboriginal cross-cultural awareness training program to increase employee knowledge of First Nations culture. "Taking an interest in learning about First Nations issues was the first step in improving relationships between two cultures," says Patrick Kelly, training co-ordinator of B.C. Hydro.

The program has been so successful it is now offered to organizations outside B.C. The hydro program was developed in collaboration with aboriginal people and is delivered by First Nations people familiar with community, corporate and government operations.

The program has three levels. Participants start with an information session about First Nations history, culture and languages. An overview on relationship building and conducting business with aboriginal people is also presented. Participants then progress to the next level which provides in depth information about a specific aboriginal group relevant to the client. The client also has the opportunity to acquaint the aboriginal group with its structure and interest. The third level of the program includes a facilitated face to face meeting between the client and the aboriginal group.

To date B.C. Hydro has provided training for several organizations and businesses such as CN Rail, the Union of B.C. Municipalities, the Insurance Corporation of B.C., and the B.C. Lottery Corporation. Reaction to the program has been very positive. Two CN Rail employees who recently attended the session noted that the training will strengthen partnerships with First Nations and stimulate new ideas and strategies.

Cross-culture awareness training can assist any organization that deals with First Nations. Ian Tait, B.C. Hydro's manager of business development and communications says: "In light of the current treaty making process in B.C., it has become even more important for companies to build stronger relationships with First Nations". I am sure anyone who is wishing to have information on this could contact someone at B.C. Hydro with regard to its aboriginal cross-culture awareness training program.

I have recently been assigned to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. If ever we are to have an interest in the heritage of this country and who probably has the most to gain or to lose, we certainly have a lot to gain by knowing our aboriginal