

*Oral Questions***LAND CLAIMS**

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, in a precedent setting announcement the B.C. government said it is ready to negotiate and settle land claims in that province. Last week the minister of Indian affairs appeared to place a roadblock in the way of negotiations by demanding a cost sharing agreement to be in place with the province as a precondition to those land claim negotiations.

In view of the B.C. minister's very positive response yesterday to the B.C. First Nations task force, is the minister willing to drop his precondition so that negotiations of the B.C. land claim can proceed as quickly as possible?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I want to, together with all members of this House, commend the Government of the province of British Columbia for its recognition that this historic injustice of some 120 years of denying the existence of aboriginal rights and title in British Columbia has now been addressed by the government of that province and that it has joined with us in agreeing to establish a treaty commission, together with the leadership of British Columbia First Nations, to get on with negotiating honourable settlements to these matters.

I think it is also obvious that the people of British Columbia will benefit more than all other Canadians from the settlement of these matters and that British Columbia must share in the roles and responsibilities that both governments must bring to the table in this process.

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his response, but I think he is aware that negotiating a cost sharing agreement with the province of B.C. could be a time consuming process, complicated by references to the courts. It could take a long time. As the minister has already indicated, it has taken 123 years to date.

Would the minister be willing to begin land claims negotiations immediately if the province were to agree to a framework agreement for discussing sharing of the costs prior to negotiations?

Mr. Speaker: I point out that the question may be out of order, but the hon. minister may want to deal with it.

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): If I may, Mr. Speaker, now that the British Columbia government has stated its position and the minister has expressed his willingness to sit down and discuss this matter, I am certainly looking forward to discussions next week. I look forward to the co-operation of the British Columbia government in recognizing its responsibilities in this matter.

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TAXATION

Mr. Al Johnson (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Last June the minister indicated in the House his willingness to consider ways of making the tax system fair and equitable, particularly as it relates to Canadian families. Since then the Schachtschneider family has lost its case in the courts and many other families are looking in dismay at a tax system which discriminates against them.

Can the minister tell us when he will do something to ensure that the tax system treats all families equally?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the very good work that the hon. member and other members of Parliament, and particularly members of the Conservative Party, are engaged in on this very important subject.

I want to assure him that the recommendations that have been advanced are being taken seriously. We are looking at them right now. I am sure that we can derive some positive conclusions from the recommendations that are forthcoming.

All I say is congratulations and we hope that together we will be able to improve this situation.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.