



Bulletin

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PROVINCES TAKE-OVER INDIAN AFFAIRS PROPOSAL

In a statement to the House of Commons on June 25, Indian Affairs and Northern Development Minister Jean Chrétien announced four measures the Government was prepared to implement to create the necessary conditions for Canada's Indians to participate fully "in the cultural, social, economic and political life" of their native land.

The first proposal, Mr. Chrétien said, was the repeal of the Indian Act. The second was that provincial governments "take over the same responsibilities for Indians that they have for other citizens in their provinces".

The Minister's statement follows:

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to place the Government's statement on Indian policy before the House. The statement outlines the views the Government brings to the consultations which must now be carried on with the Indian people and the provincial governments.

Throughout a year's consultation with Indian leaders, the Government has reviewed its programs for Indians and their effects on the present situation of the Indian people. The review has shown that this is the right time to change long-standing policies. The Indian people have shown their determination that present conditions shall not persist.

From the early days of this country, a trustee relationship of a highly paternalistic nature developed between the central Government and Indian people. The Indian people should have the right to manage their own affairs to the same extent that their fellow Canadians manage theirs. Under present conditions they do not have anything like this degree of control over their land, their funds, or in fact any of their responsibilities. This is the central fact

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about conditions today, and it must change.

Opportunities are present today in Canadian society and new directions are open. The Government believes that Indian people must not be shut out of Canadian life and must share in these opportunities. The policy is founded on the belief that Canada should be free of discrimination. People must not be kept apart from one another by artificial barriers. The goal of a non-discriminatory society can only be achieved if many ideas change. Change must not be confined to the Indian people; other Canadians must change their attitudes, too. True equality presupposes that the Indian people have the right to full and equal participation in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Canada.

BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE

The Government believes that the framework within which individual Indians and bands could achieve full participation requires the following:

First, the legislative and constitutional basis of discrimination must be removed.

Second, there must be a positive recognition by everyone of the unique contribution of Indian culture to Canadian life.

Third, services must come through the same channels and from the same government agencies for all Canadians.

Fourth, those who are furthest behind must be helped to catch up.

Fifth, lawful obligations must be recognized.

Sixth, control of Indian lands must be transferred to the Indian people.