

*Private Members' Business*

federal negotiator in charge of negotiations with the aboriginal people. Subsequently, of course, there were a number of problems which held up the committee's work for quite some time, and a number of meetings could not be held. Obviously, without meetings the parties cannot discuss the concerns of both communities.

Furthermore, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development maintains its fiduciary role *vis-à-vis* the aboriginal people. The department is therefore very much in the picture, because to the aboriginals, the department is their federal counterpart, since they will only negotiate from government to government. This means the entire regional office of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is still very much involved in this matter.

A number of associations and groups were formed since the events in Oka in 1990. To name only the larger ones, there is the Association of Property Owners inside Kanésatake, also known as APIK. These people represent the interests of about 60 families which live in the aboriginal checkerboard.

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They did a simply outstanding job and I must take the opportunity again to congratulate the leaders of this association who with their well-prepared and articulate presentations were able to convince the government that their problems were real. I can tell those who live in this area that I am particularly concerned about their daily problems and they know that I am looking after their situation regularly.

The Oka Chamber of Commerce, through its president, Michel Bond, is very concerned about economic development in the region. Everyone is wondering what parcels of land and houses might be bought for the reunification of the natives' land holdings. People wonder if it might be their own house. For the whole business community in the area, it is a big problem and they want it settled. They have continually shown leadership. The Chamber of Commerce recently formed a coalition of local non-profit organizations including the Oka farmers' wives, the united craftswomen and the owners' association, in short, any charitable or other group in Oka.

Mr. Speaker, I have left the most important for last. Mentioning it last in no way affects its importance. The citizens of this great region live in a unique territory which is unmatched. Quite legitimately, they want to

know what will happen to them tomorrow. Will their house, street or neighborhood be considered for the land reunification? Can they enlarge their house? Can they demolish it? Can they build a swimming pool? Can they rent their house? Can they enjoy their property in peace? Those are legitimate questions that any home owner has. In that area, they raise them all the time. I say again that we must make a very big effort at communicating with those people, because the citizens of Oka want their community to be as it was before. They want to live in peace in that wonderful region, Mr. Speaker, which you should visit one day.

Now there is a last offer. The Kanésatake Mohawks always said that the Oka pine grove was sacred land and that any negotiation with the federal negotiator could succeed only if the Mohawks recovered that part of the territory adjoining the famous parcel of land bought from Mr. Rousseau, and the Jardins d'Oka. It is now a municipal park which is not used by non-natives, it must be said. I think that the Oka council is quite aware of it, and many people with whom I have spoken are well aware that the pine grove park is a wonderful spot, but is used by the natives for various ancestral reasons.

The home owners south of highway 344, who you recall were the first to be thrown out when the armed warriors took Oka on July 11, 1990, a date now famous in the minds of my constituents in that part of the riding, lived and still live in a rather unusual situation. You see, the pine grove is on the north and these home owners are on the south, so the government cannot create a reserve behind, which I think neither the native people of Oka nor the whites want to have. This is what the government has done. It asked whether the village of Oka would be interested in a transfer of property. To solve the problem of those living south of highway 344, the government would buy that land, between 12 and 15 properties, and in exchange, the village would turn over the pine grove to the negotiating committee so that the federal negotiator could see the light at the end of the tunnel and finally conclude what I would call a peace treaty, Mr. Speaker, which is what everyone wants.

What we did not know but have since learned is that the residents of Girouard Street, the owners that are neighbours at the back of the residences south of highway 344, are very concerned. They say this: "If the federal government transfers the properties south of highway 344 to the municipality, the latter could lay out a