

*Government Orders*

In recent years real progress has been made toward resolving 100-year old unfinished business. In 1990 Ottawa, B.C. and the leaders of B.C.'s First Nations established a task force to recommend a negotiation process that could accommodate the numerous First Nations in B.C. that want to negotiate settlements.

The task force presented 19 recommendations in June, 1991, all of which were all accepted by the First Nations summit and the federal and provincial governments, a major achievement in itself. One of the key recommendations was to establish the British Columbia Treaty Commission as an arm's length minder of the process. The agreement committed the three partners to establish the BCTC through federal and provincial legislation and a resolution of the First Nations summit. In the meantime commissioners have been appointed by order in council and summit resolutions. They began their work in December, 1993 and have made considerable progress.

As a member of Parliament who represents 46 First Nations communities I can tell from firsthand experience of the importance of having a process to deal with longstanding grievances and issues of specific land claims and, more important, in B.C.'s case of treaties that have never been signed. It is a major undertaking of tremendous importance, probably more important than anything the B.C. government will have done in the term of its involvement over the past number of years.

There are 47 First Nations involved in the BCTC process to date. They represent over 70 per cent of the First Nations of the province and more are likely to become involved soon. The BCTC has five commissioners. Two are nominated by the First Nations summit, one by the B.C. government and one by Ottawa. The chief commissioner is selected and appointed by consensus of all three partners.

The First Nations summit includes all B.C. First Nations that have agreed to participate in the BCTC process. It provides a forum for those First Nations to meet and discuss treaty negotiations. It worked closely with Ottawa and the provinces to develop the treaty negotiation process and to establish the BCTC. As one of the partners in the process it continues to provide direction.

In Kenora—Rainy River, no different than in B.C., we have our treaties: treaty 3, treaty 9 and treaty 5. The minister responsible for Indian and northern affairs has also undertaken some significant changes to the lives of First Nations people and has tried to improve the affairs of individual communities by getting involved and trying to deal with First Nations and specific land claims.

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From firsthand experience, in order for us to get involved in what is most important, the next generation, the economics and

the social well-being of First Nations for the years to come, these land claims and these processes must work.

To get into the next century with some hope and aspiration for the young First Nation people not only in my riding but across the country and in B.C. we will have to assure them the grievances of the past will be rectified in order to get on with the future.

I, like many others who represent First Nations, have had roadblocks. I have had First Nations people tell me they are frustrated and fed up. They are not willing to wait much longer. They no longer want the federal or provincial governments to sit on their hands while they wait for a miracle. They would like that process to start.

I take this opportunity to tell the House, the people of Kenora—Rainy River and the people of B.C. that they can thank the government and the minister responsible for moving an agenda which from the last term was basically stalled or going in reverse. We are now starting to see some significant improvement for all the hard work and efforts of not only the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development but the chiefs and councils of the First Nations.

B.C. will be dealing with a six stage treaty. In this negotiation process the stages something like this: a statement of intent; preparation for negotiations; negotiation of a framework agreement; negotiation of agreement in principle; treaty finalization; treaty implementation.

The commission will assess the readiness of parties to negotiate. This involves ensuring the First Nations have the resources needed to make their case and ensuring the federal and provincial governments have struck regional advisory committees so that the local non-aboriginal residents have a voice.

This brings me to a very important point and the obvious wisdom of the positions of the government and the First Nations of the involvement and the voice of non-aboriginal residents. I will use an example of a community in my riding which is over 50 per cent aboriginal. Sioux Lookout is thought by a lot of people to be a non-aboriginal community but it does have a lot of aboriginal people. It would like to participate when we get involved in specific land claim policies and negotiations with First Nations so that when the agreements are made there is a recognition that all of us, native and non-native, will be able to live with the results.

Therefore it is very important that advisory committees are set up with local non-aboriginal residents to give them a voice so we can be assured that in the end the agreements we get will be a win-win situation and not win-lose or lose-win.

I commend again the individuals who put in this process in B.C. because with it I think the results will be much longer lasting than if this process did not have non-aboriginal people in it.