

Supply

I would like to remind the House of the six stages that a claim must go through before a treaty comes into effect. I think hon. members will observe this is a very thorough process.

In the first step a First Nation files a statement of intent with the B.C. Treaty Commission. The commission makes sure the statement is complete and forwards it to the federal and provincial governments. It is at this stage that the First Nation describes the geographic area in British Columbia it considers its traditional territory. Forty-seven statements of intent have been filed. These represent over 70 per cent of the aboriginal people of British Columbia. That is progress.

Second, the commission convenes a meeting to prepare for the negotiations. All three parties exchange information, consider the criteria, discuss the research they will do to prepare for the negotiations and identify issues of concern. Each party appoints a negotiator with a clear mandate. Each party establishes a ratification procedure, and the parties agree on the substantive and procedural matters that will be negotiated.

This is the stage at which Canada and the British Columbia government establish their own mechanisms for consultation with non-aboriginal interests. One requirement the B.C. Treaty Commission imposes on the two governments is the establishment of a regional consultative mechanism to represent thirty party interests.

When the commission determines that all three parties have met the criteria for readiness, it confirms they can proceed to stage three. This is where all three parties negotiate a framework agreement, a negotiated agenda that identifies the issues to be negotiated, the goals of the negotiation process, special procedural arrangements and a timetable for the negotiations.

So far four framework agreements have been signed and another four initialled by the negotiators. Again, this is progress.

• (1545)

In the fourth stage of the treaty process the parties negotiate an agreement in principle. These are substantive negotiations and the parties examine the framework in detail.

Fifth, the principals negotiate to finalize the treaty. Any remaining technical and legal issues are resolved at this stage. Then, and only then, the sixth stage is the implementation of the treaty. Long term implementation plans need to be tailored to specific agreements.

All commissions agree that significant progress has been made by the treaty process. The B.C. Treaty Commission process is working. It is fair, equitable and open. No one denies that the negotiations ahead will be tough. There are some very complex issues to be brought to the table. However, it is time that we settled these claims so that all British Columbians, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, can get on with the job of building a prosperous society in that province, a society where

all groups can enjoy the wealth of resources the province can offer. It will benefit all British Columbians.

It is time to get on with the job. It is not a time for fearmongering. It is a time for fairness and certainty. It is certainly not a time for delaying while we wait for a provincial election which would create a precedent and would be very much uncalled for.

I do not represent aboriginal people who have claims that are hundreds of years old. I represent over 2,000 aboriginal people. Their treaty was signed in 1923, in modern times. Yesterday I attended a funeral in my riding of the first woman Indian chief in Canada. She died at the age of 73. In 1953, when she first became a chief, she was a young woman and a young mother who was concerned about these issues. When she died, only this week, she was still concerned about them. Her mother died two years ago at the age of 103. Throughout her life she was active in trying to resolve the problems of the First Nations in my riding.

The native people would like to negotiate. I think all Canadians would like to negotiate. Every time we have a standoff all Canadians suffer. I am very concerned that the member would bring forward such a motion today.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it might be helpful if the member were to spend a little time in British Columbia rather than in Peterborough. Then he might have some comprehension of what is the content of the speech from the Department of Indian Affairs that he just read to us. He clearly has no concept of what is going on in British Columbia.

When the member says this is an open process, the people in British Columbia, who are concerned about this, which is probably the majority of British Columbians, would ask: What open process?

I am consistently asked: "Who is negotiating for us? Who are they? How were they selected? Where do they meet? When do they meet? I do now know who they are". More important, I am also asked: "What is their mandate? Who gave them the mandate? How do we even know what they are negotiating on our behalf?"

I am inclined to agree with the member that if we have a problem, which we clearly do in this situation or in any situation, that it is very helpful to have negotiations with people who are sitting down eyeball to eyeball.

However, what we have in my constituency in British Columbia is 3 per cent of the people that are represented by people who are constantly in touch with them, who clearly understand what the mandate is and, more important, who go back to their people to report regularly. They also know that they are going to be subject to a ratification vote at the end of the day. Therefore, they know that they have to negotiate in good faith on behalf of