

Bilingual Notes for Remarks by

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Strategy

at the

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Peoples/Canada Roundtable*

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

INTRODUCTION

- Good morning, Elders, Chief [Dwight] Dorey, Vice-president [Audrey] Poitras, National Chief [Phil] Fontaine, President [Jose] Kusugak, Kukdookaa [President Terri Brown], and I also want to acknowledge the work of Brenda Chamberlain, my Parliamentary Secretary for Metis and Non-Status Indians, Colleagues and Friends. Thank you for joining us here today.
- As Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, I want to acknowledge in particular Chief Dorey of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and Vice President Audrey

Poitras of the Métis National Council, who is here today representing the MNC President, Clément Chartier, who was unable to attend today as he is recovering from surgery. I wish him well with a speedy recovery. I very much appreciate the participation here today of the MNC and CAP.

- J'ai le plaisir de présider cette importante rencontre qui réunit des organismes autochtones nationaux du Canada et vos représentants au sein du gouvernement fédéral. Nous sommes tous réunis ici pour partager une vision et un objectif communs. Cette vision, tel qu'elle est énoncée dans le *discours du Trône* de février, consiste à faire en

sorte que les Autochtones canadiens participent pleinement à la vie nationale sur la base de leurs droits et des traités historiques grâce à une plus grande autonomie économique et à une meilleure qualité de vie.

- The world in which Aboriginal peoples and Canada have conducted ourselves has changed in significant ways.

The face of Aboriginal Canada is no longer found only in remote and reserve communities. It is also found in every city, every town - especially in Western Canada -

and, as everyone in this room knows, Aboriginal people will play increasingly important roles in the future well-being and prosperity of Canada.

- Another significant change is the influence of the courts on the way we as a government address your issues as Aboriginal people. Most recently through the *Powley* decision, the environment in which governments and Aboriginal people operate has changed,

as the Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed that Métis people can hold constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights.

- The third way that I see the world changing is in the area of improved federal-provincial and territorial collaboration. We are resolving our traditional jurisdictional wrangling with provincial and territorial governments, so that we can bring to an end the unfortunate situation where Aboriginal people are the “hot potato” of public policy and governments claim each other is responsible. Internally, the various departments and agencies of the Government of Canada are also learning to work better together, to use holistic, cross-cutting - or “horizontal” - approaches to Aboriginal issues.

- The world has changed, and it is necessary that we move beyond the past so we can together make progress in the future. Today is about Turning the Corner, and I see three keys to turning the corner: inclusiveness, partnerships, and relationships. As Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and as Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution I hope to contribute to these themes.

INCLUSIVENESS

- The first key to turning the corner is inclusiveness. On Aboriginal issues, inclusiveness has a particular meaning. The Government of Canada needs to

develop an inclusive Aboriginal agenda.

To me, the term “Aboriginal” includes all Aboriginal Canadians: Métis, Indians - both status and non-status - and Inuit. Aboriginal people who live in urban areas, rural areas, and on-reserve. I think the term has become fuzzy and become a term of convenience - but we need to mean what we say when we say it. This is the language of the *Speech from the Throne*, and on this I believe there can be no debate.

- Je crois que nos relations avec les peuples autochtones ont parfois eu

tendance, par le passé, à être paternalistes. Nous avons tendance à faire des choses pour le peuple autochtone et non pas en collaboration avec lui. Je sais que c'est une raison pour laquelle le Premier ministre est très intéressé à poursuivre une nouvelle stratégie pour l'engagement des Autochtones.

Cet engagement nous donne l'occasion de travailler ensemble plutôt que de subir les conflits et confrontations devant les tribunaux

- In this regard, the February *Speech from the Throne* committed the Government of Canada to engaging with other levels of government and Métis leadership on the place

of the Métis in its policies. This is a significant step forward.

- So, with respect to the Métis, maybe we should start talking about Métis symbols, identification, and political and cultural institutions. I believe this to be a cornerstone to moving ahead, and one that should not be forgotten if we want to establish new and collaborative relationships.

- **Louis Riel** is an integral part of the heritage of Canada: for some, he remains a controversial figure. For others, he stands as the first fighter for Métis rights within Confederation. But however he is viewed - from a political or a legal perspective - there can be no denying the strength of his convictions and the deep pride he generated among - the Métis.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Inclusiveness contributes to better partnerships, which are the second key to turning the corner. Two areas in which the Government of Canada is making progress on both inclusiveness and partnerships are the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and

on Economic Development.

- **The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (or UAS)** provides seed funding to support innovative multi-partner pilot projects that address the needs and priorities of Aboriginal people in urban areas. The Government of Canada is using the UAS to begin to address socio-economic conditions among urban Aboriginal people while learning about innovative policy and programming ideas, and about what works in addressing urban Aboriginal issues. We are working closely in the eight UAS pilot project cities with provincial and municipal officials, with local Aboriginal people, the private and not-for-profit sectors, and others. By partnering in the UAS pilot

projects, by engaging in interjurisdictional cooperation, and by working together, the Government of Canada is sharing the responsibility for addressing the needs of urban Aboriginal people.

- Only by working together will we be able to achieve this goal. I am therefore pleased that the *Budget* announced an additional \$25 million to double the Urban Aboriginal Strategy's budget. With these funds, the Government of Canada will be able to meet our *Speech from the Throne* commitment to expand the successful Urban Aboriginal Strategy with willing provinces and municipalities.

- La SAMU est destinée à être conçue et mise en œuvre localement par le biais du travail réalisé avec des communautés autochtones urbaines locales. Nous faisons les choses ainsi parce que les Autochtones qui vivent en milieu urbain nous ont dit que c'est ce qu'ils préféreraient. Nous employons ces approches novatrices parce que les recherches démontrent qu'elles donnent des résultats favorables.
- The UAS is helping governments learn how to work better together and with local communities. However, for initiatives like the UAS to really succeed, Aboriginal people have to work better together as well. We need you, as

representatives of Canada's Aboriginal people, to come together with local urban Aboriginal people and their local organizations and work with us.

- **Economic development** is another area where the Government of Canada can take concrete actions to respect Aboriginal people. In the West, for example, where the majority of Aboriginal people live, we know that natural resource development is booming, and companies are short on local people to hire. We also know that Aboriginal youth need support in training and transition to first jobs.
- **Working with provincial governments and the private**

sector, we can take advantage of these economic development opportunities to make strides with Aboriginal people, such as in Northern Saskatchewan and the Primrose Lake area. Doing so would be beneficial on several fronts: Aboriginal people acquire training and jobs; economic development has positive impacts – such as jobs and training for others and spin-off businesses – on regional economies; communities are brought together; and, the longer-term relationships that we want to build among other orders of government, Aboriginal peoples and the private sector are further enhanced.

- Economic development opportunities are not just in the northern parts of provinces and tied to natural resources, they can be anywhere you look, such as in city centres. This is one area where I would like to see the Urban Aboriginal Strategy expand its efforts. We must become more pro-active with our partners and actively seek out opportunities with the private sector if we want to turn the corner, and secure a place for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Building on inclusiveness and partnerships, the third key to turning the corner is relationships.

We need to build better ones with Aboriginal people, with provinces and territories, and with others.

- Indian Residential Schools continue to serve as a vivid symbol of the damaged relationship between Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians. Addressing the legacy of over 100 years of residential schools is one of the most challenging areas for our renewal and reconciliation as a nation. However, we must continue to address our collective past because our future as a just and inclusive nation relies on it.
- Many of you attended residential schools. Many of you have family

who attended residential schools and who continue to carry painful and difficult memories.

- As a government, we have been confronted with the need to act more quickly and to be proactive.

We understand that the process of healing has not been completed, and that additional work needs to be done in this respect. We need to work collectively with Aboriginal Canadians and communities to determine the best approach to make healing a reality. I will need to work with my Colleagues to ensure that the most effective and appropriate investment in healing are addressed in the months to

come.

So we have concentrated all of the government's resources to address the legacy of Indian residential schools in a new department - Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada.

- The mandate of this department is to work in partnership with other federal departments, Aboriginal peoples, churches, provincial governments and other interested groups in implementing the federal government's wider objectives of healing and reconciliation and resolving issues arising from the residential school system.

- In November 2003, we unveiled a National Resolution Framework. The Framework is an innovative, status blind approach to healing and reconciliation.

Its centrepiece is an alternative dispute resolution or ADR process.

It also provides for health supports and commemoration and a litigation option. ADR is the way of the future. It is a supportive and timely route to settlement of claims that promotes privacy and confidentiality.

- Je suis le premier à admettre que nous n'en avons pas fait suffisamment pour propager la procédure MARC aux

communautés et aux organisations. Mais, vous avez ma parole que ce gouvernement continuera de distribuer ce message.

- I believe that, ultimately, the ADR process will be recognized as an innovative model in Canada and internationally as the leading edge in dealing with historical grievances and reparations. In fact, the ADR model has attracted international attention in Australia, South America and the Middle East.
- The model is based on respect and dignity and it paves the way for improved partnerships, increased

trust and mutual respect between Canada and survivors and ultimately, the Aboriginal community.

- ADR was developed after extensive discussions with former students, their lawyers, Aboriginal leaders and church representatives. We continue to work closely with survivors and the leadership of national aboriginal organizations to ensure issues and concerns about ADR are jointly examined and addressed.

We believe this process underlines our profound commitment to a new way of doing business and

emphasizes renewed dialogue and collaborative policy development.

- ADR is not perfect but it is a good option. We will continue to work in cooperation with Aboriginal communities to develop possible improvements.
- Dealing with the legacy of residential schools will continue to present challenges. We need to confront the challenge to our relationships presented by our decision to appeal *Blackwater*. The decision to appeal *Blackwater* was a correct one on many levels.

The appeal sends a strong message about deterrence and ensures that non-profit organizations such as churches are responsible for the actions of their employees. However, as you have heard this morning, the damage done to our relationship with the Assembly of First Nations and, more importantly with survivors themselves, cannot be calculated.

- How can we balance tough decisions such as the appeal of *Blackwater* with the reality that survivors confront? They are elderly, they are confronting illness, they are being re-victimized by the

very system we believe is here to help them.

- We also need to improve our relationship with the Métis. Since the time of Louis Riel, Métis people have had to fight for their rights. And on September 19, the Supreme Court of Canada released its first ever ruling on Métis Aboriginal rights. The *Powley* case affirmed that Métis are a distinct people that hold collective Aboriginal rights - “a full-fledged rights-bearing people”. The *Powley* decision was a watershed in relations among Aboriginal people and the Government of Canada. We recognize the truth of

that decision, and are turning the corner, renewing the relationship. This decision has changed the nature of our relationship with Métis people. We are committed to continuing to work with the provinces, territories and Métis organizations to address the implications of this decision.

- Currently, the Government of Canada is engaged in multilateral discussions.

We are working with provincial governments and the MNC leadership to respond to the Supreme Court's decision. These discussions are significant, in that

they bring together for the first time in many years all the partners necessary to effect the kind of changes suggested by the *Powley* decision. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the Government of Canada has committed \$20.5 million in this year's *Budget* towards facilitating a response to the *Powley* decision. I am also pleased to confirm my commitment to holding a Ministers and leaders meeting as soon as we can arrange it. The work on responding to the *Powley* decision is a great illustration of the Government of Canada's new approach to these issues - working together by sharing responsibility.

- In the time since the *Powley* decision was handed down, we have also received tremendous cooperation from President Chartier and the Métis National Council, and I thank them for their support in encouraging our fellow Canadians to behave responsibly and cooperatively following the Supreme Court of Canada's decision on *Powley*. In the east, Chief Dorey and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples have also played a role in responsible messaging and I thank them for their cooperation.
- Today must play a role in building

better relationships with the national Aboriginal organizations. As Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, I have special relationships with two national Aboriginal organizations, CAP and the MNC.

- Since becoming Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians last December, I have been consistently impressed by Chief Dwight Dorey and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. CAP often provides the Government of Canada with creative ideas, especially in labour market and training strategies. I sincerely hope that CAP will

continue to offer these innovative solutions to issues confronting off-reserve Aboriginal people, and I look forward to working with CAP to bring these ideas into Government policy thinking.

- The other national Aboriginal organization with which I have a special relationship is the Métis National Council. The MNC have welcomed me into their communities and shown me what the western Métis are all about. Our strong bilateral relationship has contributed to a smooth transition over the Fall harvesting season when the *Powley* decision came down and into the

multilateral discussions with provinces on *Powley* to address Métis harvesting. The MNC enjoy a good relationship with many federal departments as evidenced by their accord with HRSD and their work with Health Canada to name a few examples.

- But it is not only the Government of Canada that needs to improve relationships. We need Aboriginal groups to also work with each other. We will never achieve the Prime Minister's vision of seeing Aboriginal Canadians participating fully in national life unless Aboriginal people work together towards this vision.

- En ce qui concerne le gouvernement du Canada, l'importance des relations ne se termine pas avec les Autochtones. Le gouvernement du Canada a besoin de relations solides et de confiance avec les provinces, les territoires et les autres partenaires. Nous devons nous ajuster au fait que de nombreux Autochtones vivent hors-réserve et que notre responsabilité ne prend pas fin à la limite des réserves.
- I believe that the language of the *Speech from the Throne* - about the harm that “jurisdictional wrangling” between federal and

provincial governments has caused Aboriginal social conditions - will help move the Government of Canada in the direction of “shared responsibility” to address Aboriginal issues.

I am firmly of the view that many provinces are ready for this type of approach.

And I think we collectively need to embrace it wholeheartedly.

- As federal, provincial, and territorial governments, we need to find the ways to get beyond sterile and paralyzing arguments about jurisdiction and buck-passing, to work in constructive partnership

with Aboriginal people and with each other - to help make a real difference in the quality of life for Aboriginal people. Greater intergovernmental program coherence, and in some cases integration, is needed.

CONCLUSION

- As governments and as Aboriginal peoples, we live today in a changed world from that which used to be. A vast majority of Aboriginal people live off-reserve, and many Aboriginal people move from on-reserve to off-reserve - often back and forth. The *Powley* decision has changed the world of Aboriginal rights by affirming that Métis are a

rights-bearing people. And the jurisdictional squabbling of the past is diminishing.

- The Government of Canada has 30 years of relations with the five national Aboriginal organizations - Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Métis National Council, Assembly of First Nations, Native Women's Association of Canada, and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami - and today is a great opportunity to begin a renewal of these relationships.

It is crucial that, as a government, we keep a broad horizon so we can

have, inclusiveness, partnerships, and relationships with all Aboriginal people.

- I believe that we - all of us - have a tremendous opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of those Aboriginal people who are not presently fully sharing in our nation's good fortunes. And I think that today marks a good start in Turning the Corner, in inclusiveness, in partnerships, and in relationships. Thank you.