

MEETING OF FIRST MINISTERS AND  
NATIONAL ABORIGINAL LEADERS

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RÉUNION DES PREMIERS MINISTRES ET DES  
DIRIGEANTS AUTOCHTONES NATIONAUX

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VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

(Unrevised)

Public Session

November 24, 2005

and

Press Conference

November 25, 2005

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COMPTE RENDU TEXTUEL

(non révisé)

Séance publique

Le 24 novembre 2005

et

Conférence de presse

Le 25 novembre 2005

KELOWNA, British Columbia  
November 24-25, 2005

KELOWNA (Colombie-Britannique)  
Les 24 et 25 novembre 2005

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Le 24 novembre 2005

Kelowna, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Thursday, November 24, 2005  
at 1:21 p.m. / La réunion débute le jeudi  
24 novembre 2005 à 13 h 21  
--- Opening Aboriginal Ceremony  
--- Native language spoken / Langue autochtone  
parlée

CHIEF ROBERT LOUIS: Mr. Prime  
Minister, Premiers, Ministers, Elders, National Chief and  
Aboriginal Leaders, distinguished guests, friends, on  
behalf of the Westbank First Nation, my Council and the  
Seschelt People, welcome.

Thank you drummers, thank you singers,  
thank you Roxanne Linley for the welcome song.

Welcome to the lands of the Seschelts.  
We have lived in this beautiful valley for thousands of  
years. On behalf of the Sechelts and the residents of  
the City of Kelowna, which celebrated its 100th  
anniversary this year, welcome to Kelowna.

In our language, "Kelowna" means  
grizzly bear.

Westbank is one of seven First Nation  
communities that comprise the vibrant Okanagan Nation.

Today, in the procession before you  
are representatives from our communities:

Chief Fabian Alexis(ph) from the  
Okanagan Band in Vernon;

Chief Stuart Philip(ph) from  
Penticton;

Chief Jo Denis(ph) from Lower  
Similkameen; and

Counsellor Tim Manuel, Upper Nicola.

Mr. Prime Minister, over the next two days the First Ministers and leaders in this room have an opportunity to make an historic and positive impact on our Aboriginal communities and to set a course of action that can help alleviate some of the most challenging problems facing Aboriginal peoples across Canada today.

Aboriginal issues remain one of the most pressing public policy matters in the country. Canada is frequently judged internationally by the plight of our peoples.

The recent severe water situation in Kashechewan has only served as a timely reminder of the extent of the problems. It put the focus on the challenges in developing appropriate responses designed to alleviate the poverty and suffering of Aboriginal peoples once and for all. This is why you are all here today.

The last time discussions of this significance took place on Aboriginal issues involving Canada, the provinces, the territories and Aboriginal peoples was 13 years ago in 1992 during the constitutional talks and the negotiation of the

Charlottetown Accord.

As we all know, that process was ultimately unsuccessful because the Charlottetown Accord package was voted down by Canadians.

Today, I hope that the results from this meeting in Kelowna will be much more positive for the country and Aboriginal Peoples.

While we must never lose sight of the need for constitutional reform and the full constitutional expression of our rights as Aboriginal peoples, there remains much work that needs to be done on the ground in our communities, with an appropriate investment of financial and political resources.

Your agenda for today and tomorrow focuses on some of the most critical and pressing needs of our peoples: housing, education, health, economic opportunities and governance.

What we have learned in my community of Westbank First Nation is that you cannot achieve success or your full potential as a people unless you have self-government with the appropriate powers and the proper institutions of governance.

Money is critical, of course, but so are the governance institutions and service delivery mechanisms in our communities. If these elements are not strong, then money itself won't cure the problems.

I am very proud to say that my

community is in a fortunate position. Today, Westbank First Nation is self-governing under our own laws and community consultation recognized by Parliament in the Westbank First Nation Self-Government Act of 2004.

Moving out from under the Indian Act is never easy. For Westbank, it required hard work and tireless dedication by our community as well as the support of Canada and many others. I sincerely thank those of you in this room that helped make it happen.

When we ask ourselves why is change so difficult, the answer has, of course, much to do with politics.

At times when there has been an opportunity to work with Aboriginal peoples, governments have been reluctant or unwilling to move.

At other times when governments have been motivated and ready to move, Aboriginal peoples ourselves have sometimes been reluctant or unwilling.

The result: inertia and continuance of an unsatisfactory status quo remains.

To move forward, all participants need to support and demand change at the same time and then work quickly and in good faith across the table when opportunities present themselves.

Today, in this room, there are Aboriginal leaders from across Canada who want to make a real difference, who want their people to have the power

and the responsibility to govern themselves, along with access to the financial resources to make it work, who also want to settle land claims and resolve unfinished business with the Crown.

While others may not share the same optimism and feel the need to demonstrate those concerns publicly, ultimately, as Aboriginal leaders, we all want the same thing: recognition, respect, dignity and justice. Others may have a different way to communicate it.

I also see here today in this room a federal government equally committed to move forward. However, in order for Canada and the Aboriginal peoples to make progress, the provinces and the territories also need to be on our side as our partners.

There is also a need for governments to be able to respond quickly to First Nation needs today. As we all know, vision and opportunity too often give way to cumbersome bureaucracy and endless process. The result: frustration and lost opportunities.

First Nation proposals for improved policies and more effective negotiation processes need to be given a chance.

It is in this spirit of making change a reality by harnessing vision and opportunity that I end my opening comments.

Once more, I welcome you all to the



lands of the Seschelts and to the beautiful Okanagan Valley. I wish you well in your deliberations.

--- Native language spoken

--- Applause and drums /

Applaudissements et tambours

--- Native language spoken /

Langue autochtone parlée

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I am here to show you the demonstration of the lighting of the lamp here.

I come from Tuktoyaktuk, edge of the Beaufort Sea, and we have the same kind of way of living in the past as anybody living in the Arctic.

What they do is they have lamps to cook and they use it for heat and they use it for cooking. They hunt all the seals. They hunt the seals or the whales or whatever that has oil, the (native language), they call the bearded seal.

Whatever oil they save in the wintertime -- when it is frozen in the wintertime, what they do is they pound oil up so that it would be easier to turn into oil when they light the lamp. So that is the kind of source of heat they have and our ancestors used to use before.

She is demonstrating the lighting of it. In other words, they use a bigger lamp for cooking, with a longer wick, and they use it for light as well.

That is the way they were living long ago, our ancestors.

I have barely caught up to that myself even though I am an elder right now, although my mom used to use it once in a while to have a light because we would get a shortage of fuel sometimes in those days. So that is how they used the lamp there.

Well, I think I have to do a little prayer too, myself, here for each side. I will do it in my language if you don't mind, everybody.

--- Native language spoken

MR. NORMAN FLEURY: Good afternoon. Norman Fleury is my name. I am a Métis elder with the Métis community in Manitoba and also Canada.

I am extremely honoured to be here today before you as I stand before Our Creator and also all of the Nations of this land.

--- Native language spoken

Le Bon Dieu, je me mets devant vous aujourd'hui pour parler pour les besoins de notre nation, les Premières nations, les Métis et les Inuit de ce pays. On demande le courage, on demande l'espoir, on demande de nous donner l'honneur de travailler ensemble, de travailler pour notre grand pays le beau pays du Canada, pour nos enfants, nos ancêtres, nos parents et notre parenté. Je vous demande encore, Notre Seigneur, Notre Créateur, de nous aider aujourd'hui. Je te dis merci.

Now, I would like to -- Mr. Prime

Minister, as part of this ceremony and prayer, I was greatly honoured today to be part of many Nations, with the Eagle staffs and our drums, our regalia, the honours that we had to come before this great assembly.

We the Métis Nation would like to honour you. The Métis Nation look at you in high regards and great respect. We have waited over 100 years for a leader like you. You have courage and you have a vision and you have a very strong leadership.

We continue as a Métis Nation to look at ourselves as a strong, viable, strong Nation who are strong, proud Canadians who have made this country what it is today.

You have time and time demonstrated and recognized the Métis Nation.

In Manitoba, it was unanimously voted by 2,000 delegates of the Manitoba Métis Federation at its annual general assembly to present you with the highest and most prestigious honour to be awarded and bestowed by the Métis people or the Métis Nation of this country. It is called the Manitoba Order of the Sash.

You weren't able to attend but today we would like to honour you because those types of honours and presentations have to be done in person. You can't do it by phone. You can't do it by mail.

I would like to now call my President, David Chartrand of the Manitoba Métis Federation, and

also our President, Audrey Poitras of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

I would like my President, David Chartrand, to present you with the Order of the Sash.

--- Pause / Pause

MR. NORMAN FLEURY: Mr. President, in addition to the Order of the Métis Nation, which was presented to you on May 31st, on behalf of the Métis Nation, we would now want to present you with the authentic Métis jacket as worn by Métis statesmen.

This signifies nationhood, cultural pride, leadership. It also represents our relatives the Métis, the children, the grandchildren, the grandparents, the parents and our families. We would want you to wear this with pride wherever you go.

This was also part of our livelihood as part of the fur trade and the industry and the buffalo hunts.

Congratulations! Merci.

--- Applause and drums /

Applaudissements et tambours

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you so much.

--- Drums / Tambours

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Let me begin by calling the meeting to order and let me deviate somewhat by just thanking the Métis Nation. I feel deeply, deeply

honoured and I am very, very grateful.

I also want to thank the elders, Chief Robert Louis and the Westbank First Nation for welcoming us to Kelowna.

I also want to thank the other elders who are present, all of those who participated in the ceremony and the others who are here in the room.

I want to thank Elder Elmer Courchesne of the Sagkeeng First Nation. Two years ago, Elder Courchesne offered the federal Cabinet a blessing when we took the oath of office and I am glad to see him again.

I want to thank the leadership of the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Native Women's Association of Canada for their commitment to working with each other and with us as partners.

J'aimerais remercier le ministre Andy Scott, dont la direction nous a permis d'arriver au point où nous sommes aujourd'hui.

I would like to thank Premier Klein and through him all the territorial leaders, all the provincial leaders who are here.

Remerciements au premier ministre Ralph Klein, président du Conseil de la Fédération, et à tous les autres premiers ministres pour avoir été disposés à revoir les façons de faire dans le passé, de

manière à les améliorer.

In particular, I would like to thank our host Premier Gordon Campbell who has worked tirelessly with all of us who have gone across the country to ensure that we could come together as we do today in a spirit of partnership and cooperation.

A year and a half ago, retracing steps from my youth, I travelled across Canada, north of the 60th parallel. I met with each of the territorial premiers at that time and I visited communities in each of the three territories. Each stop was distinct.

From Pond Inlet to Tuktoyaktuk to Watson Lake, every community was unique but what became familiar to me was the welcome, the smiling faces of the children in each community, which you know so well.

Quand nous nous promenions dans les rues de bon nombre de ces communautés, une ribambelle d'enfants se joignait à nous, et leurs yeux rayonnaient de la curiosité et de l'espoir dont seul un coeur d'enfant est rempli chaque jour. À vrai dire, j'avais l'impression qu'ils voulaient me poser toutes les questions possibles et me montrer tout ce qui les entoure.

Now needless to say, these meetings with the children were deeply encouraging. But when I would then sit down with their elders, they would describe a different world from the one that I had seen.

They would describe the life of a typical young adult in their community and the challenges that the children I had met would encounter as they grew older.

They would describe the high incidence of violence and abuse in the home, of disease and addiction, teen pregnancy and suicide.

They would describe the difficulty of keeping the children in school, how hard it felt to send their children away for the rest of their education.

I share this only to illustrate what all of us in this room know to be true, not only in the remote communities of the North but on too many reserves and in too many of our cities and towns, that there is an unacceptable gap between the hopeful promise of youth and the experience of Aboriginal adulthood, a gap made even more unacceptably by the fact that Aboriginal youth represent the largest segment of Canadian youth and the fastest growing.

Nous faisons face à un impératif moral. Dans un pays aussi riche que le nôtre, envié partout dans le monde, de bons soins de santé et une bonne éducation devraient pouvoir être tenu pour acquis. Ils sont les instruments qui mènent à l'égalité des chances, la base sur laquelle notre société est bâtie.

We are here today because the descendants of the people who first occupied this land

must have an equal opportunity to work for and to enjoy the benefits of our collective prosperity.

Today, the majority do not because of gaps in education and skills, in health care and housing, and because of limited opportunities for employment.

Put simply, these gaps between Aboriginal Canadians and other Canadians and between Aboriginal men and women are not acceptable in the 21st century. They never were acceptable and the gaps must be closed.

Over the next two days, we will outline a clear plan to achieve our goal. To do that, all of us have to work together.

Our plan will have to recognize that conditions in the Far North are different from those on reserve, that conditions on reserve are different from those in our cities.

Our plan will have to recognize the very different issues facing First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation, and that the needs of Aboriginal women must not be forgotten.

The challenges we face require goals that are concrete, and achieving them requires that we measure our progress along the way.

Coming into this meeting, we have established a consensus with the Aboriginal leadership that we should set a series of 10-year goals but I would



also suggest that we set interim targets as well for five years from now to ensure that we remain focused and accountable.

The challenges are urgent and we can't afford to let this opportunity slip away. We must think in the long term but we must act now.

Let me be clear about one other thing. If our methods aren't producing results, we will have to change them.

Les défis qui nous attendent exigent des objectifs concrets. Pour les atteindre, nous devons mesurer les progrès réalisés. Nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre de laisser passer cette occasion. Si nos méthodes ne produisent pas les résultats voulus, il faudra changer nos façons de procéder.

What we seek to do will cost money but money without an effective partnership, without innovative solutions, without clear targets and full accountability and transparency will do nothing, and we will not pursue that course.

All of us around this table must assume our share of responsibility for the challenge we face. Quite simply, we must and we will do better.

So let us agree today that we will break from the past and take a new approach, one that produces the results we seek with the accountability that Canadians expect.

Notre premier défi consiste à combler l'écart qui existe en éducation.

Le fondement de tout ce que nous voulons faire, tout ce que nous voulons accomplir, sera de donner aux jeunes la chance de réaliser leur potentiel.

Cela veut dire construire des écoles, améliorer les compétences des enseignants.

Cela veut dire s'assurer que les élèves obtiennent leur diplôme et que l'éducation ne se termine pas à la fin de la 12e année.

Cela signifie ouvrir les yeux des jeunes sur l'univers post-secondaire et aux perspectives qu'il procure.

Cela signifie offrir une formation professionnelle pour qu'ils aient de meilleurs emplois.

Dans tous ces cas, cela veut dire donner aux jeunes les outils nécessaires pour y parvenir.

For the first time in Canada's history, we are committing to developing a network of First Nations school systems administered under First Nations jurisdiction, in cooperation with the provinces who deliver education to Canadians.

In public schools in urban centres as well as the North, we will help ensure that First Nations, Inuit and the Métis culture, as the case may be, is a vital presence in the curriculum and we will work

with the provinces and territories to develop centres of excellence for Inuit and Métis learning.

We will encourage young Aboriginal women and men to go to college and to university with First Nation, Inuit and Métis bursaries, and we will work with our partners in the public and the private sectors to develop the apprenticeship programs needed to help Aboriginal Canadians compete for high-paying jobs.

Our goal is to close the high school graduation gap completely within 10 years and to close the post-secondary gap by half in the same period for both young men and women.

In five years, we will close both gaps by 20 per cent. That means more than 22,000 more students will graduate from high school and close to 15,000 more students will graduate from colleges or universities or become trained as apprentices, with an additional 3,500 people taking part in literacy and other essential skills programs.

The second challenge is in health care.

The gaps that persist between Aboriginal health and the health of most Canadians are unconscionable.

The incidence of infant mortality is almost 20 per cent higher for First Nations than for the rest of Canada.

Suicide can be anywhere from three to 11 times more frequent, particularly among the Inuit.

And teen pregnancies are nine times the national average.

It is evident that these heartbreaking facts speak not just to health care. They speak to the psychic and the emotional turmoil in communities that we must find ways urgently to address.

We started this effort just over a year ago when Aboriginal leaders participated in the First Ministers Meeting on Health Care and there we recognized the need for a new health framework and we began work on an unprecedented document, the Aboriginal Health Blueprint.

It is a comprehensive plan for the delivery of reliable health care in every province and territory, on reserve and off.

Aboriginal health is a national priority but care must be local. It begins with health care professionals and we will aim to double the number of Aboriginal health professionals in 10 years, from 150 physicians and 1,200 nurses today, and we will focus on core measures of health that we can monitor and improve upon in each community.

Based on available data, we have set goals with the cooperation of the Aboriginal leadership to reduce the gaps in key areas such as infant mortality,

youth suicide, childhood obesity and diabetes by 20 per cent in five years and 50 per cent in 10.

We acknowledge that more work is required to collect further data in these areas and we have agreed to work with all of our partners to do this.

That being said, this can only be a start. No one will be satisfied until these gaps are closed completely.

These steps will take funding and I fully recognize that the money that we committed to Aboriginal health care last year from the federal government has not flowed quickly enough and I can tell you that in the future it will.

The third challenge is to ensure the fundamentals of good housing and clean water.

Housing is about having more than a roof over your head. It is about dignity, it is about pride of place, a stake in the community and an investment in the future.

Au fil des ans, nous avons rénové et bâti des dizaines de milliers de maisons, et malgré cela, un nombre important d'autochtones continuent de souffrir de la piètre qualité des logements existants.

Cette situation présente deux défis.

D'abord, dans plusieurs communautés, les logements ne sont tout simplement pas disponibles pour ceux dans le besoin.

Ensuite, il arrive souvent que ces communautés n'aient même pas les capacités nécessaires pour bâtir les logements dont leur population ont besoin.

We can reduce the housing gap significantly with a comprehensive effort.

We will develop housing authorities and institutes and expand the skills of First Nation, Inuit and Métis to manage their land, infrastructure and financing.

We will encourage a culture of home ownership in Aboriginal communities and build a labour force to keep the construction jobs in the community.

I believe that we can realistically close the housing gap on reserve by 40 per cent within five years and by 80 per cent in 10.

Off reserve, we will seek to partner with the provinces and the territories to reduce the gap by half in five years by providing access to housing for some 17,000 households.

In the Far North, we will close the housing gap by 35 per cent within five years, with more than 1,200 new units, and we are committed to getting started immediately, in time for the coming construction season.

Overall, it is estimated that our housing effort will generate more than 150,000 person-years of employment, equivalent to some 15,000 jobs over

the next 10 years.

We will take the same approach to clean drinking water.

Bringing services and infrastructure to rural and remote communities is challenging but it cannot become a barrier.

We will act to regulate water quality on reserves, we will continue to build new facilities and we will enhance the training of Aboriginal people to operate them.

Les questions fondamentales auxquelles nous faisons face sont l'éducation, la santé et le logement, ainsi que l'eau potable, mais c'est aussi en créant des possibilités économiques et en stimulant la création d'emplois stables et bien rémunérés que nous allons aider les communautés à s'épanouir.

Dans le domaine de l'emploi, nous sommes conscients des obstacles auxquels font face les communautés rurales et éloignées, et pour les aider à les surmonter, en plus d'investir dans l'éducation, nous investirons dans le développement des compétences.

De cette façon, les communautés seront plus en mesure de répondre elles-mêmes à leurs besoins de main-d'oeuvre spécialisée et de saisir les occasions qui s'offrent à elles.

We are committed to connecting our rural and remote communities to the world and we will

bring broadband internet access to 250 more communities in the next five years.

This is an issue with far-reaching benefits for the internet is an unparalleled tool for long-distance learning and access to health care online.

Taking these steps will help us prepare for the next decade's untold potential for economic expansion in Canada.

The number of major projects listed or under development in the North is simply staggering.

From diamond mines to oil and gas to the infrastructure needed to support them, the number of high-paying jobs and employment opportunities will be impressive. Aboriginal Canadians must be a significant beneficiary and this can only be if their training begins right away.

Even more to the point, to enhance economic opportunity, Aboriginal Canadians need the power to chart their own futures.

We have already taken steps down this road with recent legislation that provides First Nations with the tools to raise capital for public works, to manage their own lands and resources and to benefit from the jobs that come from all of this.

Considering all of these measures, we are confident that in five years we can narrow the gap in median employment income by half.



What we have learned is that if we hope to achieve real change, we can no longer work in isolation. All of the goals that we are laying out here and the additional ones to be discussed over the next couple of days, all of these initiatives require a new partnership among all of us and a new relationship with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation, one based on mutual respect, responsibility and accountability.

We recognize the treaty and Aboriginal rights protected in our Constitution. This is the foundation of our relationship. With the goals we are laying out, we are building on that foundation.

Today, we reaffirm our commitment to renewing our approach to implementing self-government and treaties and to the resolution of Aboriginal rights to land and resources.

But Aboriginal leadership also has responsibilities to their people and to their partners and that includes everyone around this table.

The targets that we set today cannot be lost in some kind of a communiqué. They must be tracked. They must be measured constantly and urgently.

Just as the federal government has set targets for what we will achieve with our investments, so too must everyone involved in the process be accountable throughout program design, accountable throughout service delivery. That means federal, provincial, territorial

governments. It means First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities as well.

We need a commitment to open this to transparency and good governance and that is why I am so pleased by the proposal from the Assembly of First Nations to create offices for a First Nations Auditor General and an ombudsman.

Canadians expect the most from us and we will be judged based on what we deliver.

So indeed, I want to congratulate all of you for your leadership and for your commitment to building the capacity of Aboriginal organizations and communities to strengthen governance and accountability because we cannot move forward without it.

Les Canadiens s'attendent à ce qu'on trouve des solutions. C'est pourquoi, en collaboration avec les chefs autochtones, nous établissons des points de repère. C'est pourquoi nous sommes prêts à mesurer nos progrès et à divulguer les résultats obtenus.

Dans ce sens, je salue les engagements de chaque province et de chaque territoire à faire la même chose.

Not far from here, in Kamloops, nearly 100 years ago, the chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau or Thompson tribes delivered a letter to Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In that letter, they described the trust and the spirit of mutual respect that

had shaped their first encounters with the people of Europe.

That letter was a call from the heads of three nations to another for a relationship to be set aright, for First Nations to be recognized in a young Canada as partners in the future.

Over the course of our history, we have heard this call from all First Nations, from the Inuit and from the Métis Nation. Yet, for too long, we have only been negotiators sitting across the table from one another.

Today, we sit down on the same side of the table as partners. We have taken our rightful places. Now, we must begin the hard work together.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: I would now like to call upon the other First Ministers and national Aboriginal leaders.

I will call first on Premier Klein as Chair of the Council of the Federation.

HON. RALPH KLEIN: Thank you.

Prime Minister, fellow Premiers, MPs, MLAs, MMAs, MPPs --

--- Laughter / Rires

HON. RALPH KLEIN: -- Aboriginal leaders and elders.

--- Native language spoken

As Chair of the Council of the Federation, I want to take this opportunity on behalf of all the Premiers and the Aboriginal leaders here today to thank you, Prime Minister, for convening this very important meeting.

I would like to recognize also my colleague Gordon Campbell for his lead in preparing us all for this meeting and of course for extending his hospitality. Thank you, Gordon.

It is clear that a tremendous amount of work has been under way. We have an agenda full of critical issues. We have health and housing and economic opportunities, relationships and education.

There is no doubt about it, and you alluded to it, Prime Minister, that the plight of Canada's Aboriginal people is of concern to all provinces and territories, and Premiers expressed that concern to Aboriginal leaders when we met with them in Calgary last August.

Today, I think we can all agree that we must work together over the next 10 years to close the gaps in living standards between Aboriginal people and other Canadians, and as you said, in some cases, in five years.

Compared to other Canadians, more Aboriginal people in the country live in poverty. They

die earlier, they don't attain the same standards of education, they don't have access to the same economic opportunities, and we mustn't allow these disparities to continue.

So many of the issues we will discuss at this meeting are inter-related.

We know that the quality of life in Aboriginal communities such as access to health care, education and proper housing has an effect on the ability of Aboriginal people to meaningfully participate in the economic growth and prosperity. For example, a child can't be successful in school if he or she doesn't have safe and adequate housing.

As well, we all share the goal of developing healthier individuals and healthier communities. Everyone benefits from improving Aboriginal people's health status.

We, like some other provinces, have a large Aboriginal population and probably the largest Métis population in Canada. These populations are growing fast and they are young and they are mobile and their needs have to be met.

In our province, we have developed an Aboriginal Policy Framework that sets out a long-term structure for existing and new government of Alberta policies that will address First Nations, Métis and other Aboriginal issues in Alberta.

This framework proposes a path to the future in Alberta that emphasizes well-being, self-reliance, effective consultations on resource and economic development partnerships and roles and responsibilities.

In 1990, by provincial legislation, Alberta established the only Métis land base in Canada. The Alberta Métis Settlement Act and other related legislation protects 1.25 million acres of settlement lands in Alberta. It sets out local government structures and systems and provides financial stability to the Métis people of Alberta.

In 2002, working with the Aboriginal organizations, Alberta unveiled a First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework, and this is very important to me.

You heard me speak in three languages, only three. There are probably 100 across Canada. Nobody knows those languages. We know the history of this country 160 or 200 years ago but we know nothing about 10,000 years ago or more.

So under that framework, Alberta schools will now offer Aboriginal language and cultural programs and we have developed award-winning Aboriginal studies textbooks in consultation with elders and treaty areas in the Métis Nations. Jose, you alluded to that when you were recently in Calgary.

At the post-secondary level, Alberta has introduced innovative Aboriginal teacher education programs in collaboration with First Nations and Aboriginal and northern colleges.

In our province, we have learned that by working with Aboriginal leaders we can take concrete steps to address social and economic issues at a local level.

So in advance of this meeting and like other provincial premiers and territorial leaders, the Alberta government met with Alberta's First Nations chiefs and Métis leaders.

We received their input on a number of issues that are important to them and our First Nations leaders shared their concerns over the need to honour and respect the treaties, first of all, their desire to participate fully in the social and economic life of Canada, and the need to close the gap between First Nations and other Canadians in education, housing and health.

Alberta's Métis people told us they need access to similar social and economic opportunities as other Aboriginal people and access to federal funding.

But the one common thread we heard is that it is critical that this meeting result in improvements for Aboriginal people on and off reserves, those in Alberta's Métis settlements and in other

communities.

So in recognition of Alberta's strong relationships with First Nations and Métis, I am proud to note two Aboriginal leaders who are attending as part of Alberta's delegation:

Chief Sanford Big Plume of the Tsuu T'ina First Nation is representing Treaty 6, 7 and 8, whose lands are in Alberta; and

Eldon Armstrong is President of the Métis Settlement General Council, that is, the land base we created, and he is representing the 8 settlement areas in Alberta.

Audrey Poitras, President of the Métis Nation of Alberta Association is also here as a member of the Métis National Council delegation.

Prime Minister, we must recognize that we are dealing with many complex issues.

We need the federal government to work with all of us here and with the local Aboriginal groups that live in each of our jurisdictions.

We need to take meaningful approaches on the ground to improve Aboriginal peoples' lives.

The way that we as governments address the gaps that exist between our Aboriginal people and the rest of Canadian society will define our country's future.

I know that we can work constructively



to tackle these challenges together and I am looking forward to a productive meeting.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Premier.

I would now ask Premier Campbell, our host, to take the floor.

HON. GORDON CAMPBELL: Thank you, Prime Minister.

Let me start today by thanking the elders and the people of the Okanagan people and the Westbank First Nations for their welcoming in their traditional way.

It made me reflect, Prime Minister, that actually our entire history in Canada is part of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people welcoming, welcoming us to their lands, welcoming us to their cultures and guiding us to a future.

So today, we have an opportunity as Prime Minister, as Premiers, as chiefs, as leaders of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada to map out the beginning of a new future for the Aboriginal people of this country.

I am joined, as our other Premiers, by members of our First Nations and Métis people in British Columbia. I am pleased that all seven members of the new

B.C. Leadership Council have joined me here today as we strive to establish a new relationship between First Nations people and the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada.

At last today, we each sit at the table of Confederation in true partnership based on recognition, respect and reconciliation and it is important as we embark on the next two days for each of us to reflect on our history as a country.

Canada's First Peoples have been waiting for a seat at the table of Confederation. Today, we face each other and we face up to the failings of our past and look forward to a future that is worthy of every Canadian, every First Nation, Métis and Inuit child in this great land.

It has taken 138 years to bring us to this moment in our history, to bring us to the table together as true partners in a common commitment to bridge the gaps that have denied Aboriginal people their rightful place in Canada.

The day has come to build a new relationship for a new Canada, one that offers all Canadians an equal promise of a better tomorrow with equal access to education, health care, housing, economic development and opportunity.

One that recognizes the fundamental fact of our common heritage as Canadians is that we are a

nation of nations defined not just by two solitudes that have preoccupied the history of Canada but by a third solitude as well, a forgotten solitude.

A third solitude exists that has been ignored, dismissed and indeed, through most of our history, denied in Canada.

A third solitude exists that has been discounted by governments at every level and of all political stripes.

A third solitude exists that has struggled even for recognition of the rights and title explicitly protected in our Constitution.

I am talking about Canada's Aboriginal people: First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.

For me, this meeting is about facing up to the failings of the past and the real needs of the present, not to find fault or to cast blame but to find new paths to a brighter future.

Prime Minister, I would be remiss if I did not say thank you to the leaders of our national Aboriginal organizations who have come to this table with a positive agenda for change, with a positive commitment to build relationships based on trust and understanding, to build relationships that are based on their true history and our true history as Canada so that we can build the kind of future that is so essential.

This is not simply a matter of

recognizing legal and moral duties which we accept as Canadians, and we live up to the rights and freedoms enshrined under sections 35 and 25 of the Charter.

More fundamentally, each of us as leaders at this table have a duty to extend the full promise of Canada to all Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike regardless of where they live.

We have an obligation to build on the legal framework of our Constitution to extend the same rights, entitlements and range of opportunities to Aboriginal Canadians that are available to all Canadians, on and off reserve or treaty lands.

A high-quality education and healthcare system is the birthright of all Canadians.

An education system that reflects on the history, the languages, the traditions and culture of all the nations that make up this country is an essential component of building a top-quality education for the people who live here and the people who will still come here in the future.

Decent housing and equitable access to economic opportunities should be the realized reality of all Canadians.

This is, at the end, the point of this meeting. It is to proclaim our mutual commitment to begin as true partners to build a new relationship that embraces the true promise of Canada.

Indeed, that is the point of the new relationship we are now building in British Columbia.

It is a relationship that recognizes we are all here to stay.

It is a relationship that is rooted in recognition, mutual respect and accommodation of Aboriginal rights and title.

And it is a relationship that speaks to a shared vision of who we are and what we want to achieve together for our children and for future generations.

This is our moment of truth. Canadians are watching and they are counting on us.

The cynics may say that this is nothing more than a photo op. They may be thinking, we saw this movie years ago, 13 years ago, 18 years ago, when you guys last met at a table and there is no reason to believe that anything is going to change this time.

Prime Minister, our obligation is to prove those cynics wrong.

It is to establish an environment of hope and opportunity for each and every Canadian that lives in this country.

It is to reach out to our First Nations and say, reconciliation, recognition and respect are the foundation stones upon which we will build our future.

And we can do that.

Who can blame the cynics? The legacy of the past is a legacy of talks and fine words, inaction and frustration, but we cannot afford to let that happen.

We cannot afford to let Canada down, to let First Nations children down or Métis children or Inuit children.

But more importantly, we cannot afford to forego the opportunities that our future presents to us in this great country.

We can shape Canada's future and we can start -- and I underline that -- it will just be a start but we can start that here.

We make the policies. We pass the laws. We control the budgets. We cannot pass the buck.

We have big challenges on the table that must be addressed with commitment, creativity, resolve, and yes, with resources but we have a historic opportunity to set the wheels of progress irrevocably in motion right here at this meeting over the next two days.

We must leave this meeting committed to a workplan for meaningful progress that is achievable, that is measurable and in which we all are held accountable.

As I crossed the country talking with Premiers and Aboriginal leaders, each of them called for a plan that had specifics, specific actions we could

take.

To deal with the glaring problems and the glaring gaps that currently exist, resources must flow reliably.

Prime Minister, I appreciated the fact that you mentioned the issues that we dealt with last year.

We want to be sure that as resources are announced, they make their way to communities across this country.

The test for each of us will not be whether we can sit in a room and congratulate one another, it will be whether a young Aboriginal child is graduating from high school, whether Aboriginal people can have the health care they need, whether they see the same world of opportunities that each of us would expect for each of our families in each of our provinces and territories. That will be the test.

In British Columbia, we will march together and we will mark together our progress year after year after year.

I would encourage us all to meet again not in five years but in two, in two years so we can hold ourselves to account for the commitments that we each make.

It is not too much to ask that we focus our attention on these issues on an ongoing basis

until the gap is closed and I ask each of us at this table to consider that.

Prime Minister, we have an opportunity that is before us. We are all committed to eliminating the gaps that exist on and off reserve for Canada's First People.

I want Aboriginal young people, First Nations, Métis and Inuit young people to have the sense of excitement that learning offers them in each of their communities and we can do that if we are willing to take this step by step by step and if we are listening to and guided by the leaders of the Aboriginal communities of Canada.

They will be the ones that will map out our future, that will map out our actions, that will give us the tools that we need to measure our results and to hold us and themselves to account as we move ahead.

I recognize that we will not fix the world overnight. We cannot redress all injustices in a year or two but we can begin.

I want to reflect on the fact that the Assembly of First Nations, when they first came to meet with me, talked about closing these gaps in 10 years. Let us commit ourselves to that.

Let us surprise ourselves by what we can do when we work together and build on the values that Canadians embrace regardless of political party,



regardless of province, equality of opportunity and an expanding horizon for the dreams of the generation that will follow.

We are here as leaders and we must lead. We must do so deliberately and emphatically to take our country to a higher level.

How blessed we are to live in Canada. How blessed we are for the history that we have received. But how important it is for us to recognize that our history was based on the foundation of First Nations: Aboriginal and Métis people and Inuit people welcoming us, inviting us in, guiding us to a future that today we should be proud of.

In British Columbia, we are breaking new ground in areas like revenue-sharing and cooperative decision-making that will hopefully move us beyond the narrow roots of narrow-mindedness.

It is time for us to open the future. It is time for us to break down the barriers that have separated us, institutional and otherwise, from the goals that we set for ourselves.

This should be the first of many meetings. We should meet until we have accomplished our goal. We should commit to one another and to the people we serve that we can provide for the future that everyone deserves.

Over the next two days, we have the

opportunity to light a flame of hope. We have the opportunity to fuel a beacon of hope for the future.

Let us not take timid and tentative steps. Let us take bold and decisive actions to bridge the gaps that have left Aboriginal people behind for far too long.

Let us seize this promising moment in our history to claim the full promise of Canada for all Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Premier Campbell.

I would now call on National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations.

CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE: I want to extend greetings to all the first ministers, our brothers and sisters from the Métis and the Inuit and to the Okanagan Nation who are our host for this meeting.

I also want to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to all of those kind people that blessed the success of this gathering.

I am tabling with you the full text of my opening remarks. Out of respect for the time allotted me, I will provide a summarized version.

I want to begin by speaking to a very recent development, the agreement in principle we

achieved yesterday with the federal government on a fair and just settlement package for residential school survivors.

It is of crucial importance that we resolve this issue from our shared past if we are going to truly engage in a discussion of our shared future.

Simply put, yesterday was a great day. I hope today will be another great day and the beginning of a new era in the relationship between First Nations and first ministers.

Many years ago, our respective representatives gathered in similar ways to sign treaties. The spirit and intent of the treaties speak to our mutual respect and mutual recognition from one another as nations. That was to be the basis for our shared land and our shared future.

We recognize that we now have provincial boundaries across our territories. The primary relationship for First Nations remains with the federal government, the Crown, but we acknowledge the reality that the provinces play an important role in the life of this nation and the lives of our people.

My message today is straightforward. Poverty among First Nations can be eliminated. This goal is achievable within the near, not the distant, future and our achievement will benefit Canada as a whole.

Every First Nation citizen and every

human being is entitled to have their basic needs met and governments have the responsibility to establish the conditions to make this possible.

This principle lies at the heart of the constitutionally protected treaty agreements between the First Nations and other people.

This principle must lie at the heart of the relationship between our people and other governments in Canada now and in future.

The denial of the existence of First Nations people and their rights has led to the deplorable social and economic conditions and crushing poverty in our communities. We need a new government-to-government relationship based on recognition, respect and accommodation of Aboriginal title, inherent rights and treaty rights. Through this new relationship, we can commit to the reconciliation of Aboriginal and Crown titles and jurisdictions.

I know that there are pessimists and cynics who think I am too optimistic. We are well aware of the many decades of failed efforts to tackle the oppressive conditions in many First Nations communities. It is my hope that we have finally learned a fundamental lesson.

Social theorists have confirmed that poverty is a structural outcome, not an accident or the result of some flaw in First Nations character.

Quick fixes or, worse yet, blaming the victims of poverty will not work. Poverty can only be undone by dismantling the structure that created it in the first place, structures like the Indian Act. It will be necessary to replace this with a commitment to new structures that recognize and implement First Nations governments and their jurisdictions.

Coordination, mutual respect and sharing among all governments will be key instruments to achieving this change. We must all be ready to embrace change and sustainable solutions. That is the thinking that lies at the heart of the Assembly of First Nations 10-year challenge.

There is a growing body of work looking at why some Indian nations have succeeded in economic development and why others have not. It is clear that there is an undeniable interplay between social, economic and political developments that cannot be ignored. Quality of life is directly connected to self-government.

Our 10-year challenge is founded on a holistic view of developments that is consistent with this leading edge of development theory. The recognition of our jurisdiction and the development of our governments is a critical component to our well-being and a requirement based on our Aboriginal and treaty rights as well as basic human rights.

As First Nations take on more authority, control and jurisdiction, we take on greater responsibilities for outcomes accountability and transparency. Mr. Prime Minister, we welcome your reference to our work on a First Nations Auditor General and Ombudsman.

First Nations governments and people require our federal and provincial partners to step up and make a first real instalment and a real investment in this project.

Let me be very clear, this is not a handout or a guilt tax. This is about Canada resolving its unfinished business. It is a dividend to the First Nations who have contributed and continue to contribute so much to the prosperity of this country by investing in our lands and resources. With this dividend, First Nations governments will reinvest in their communities and their people.

In all the areas we will be discussing at this meeting, the First Nations seek three basic elements: recognition, investment and development. We must cast aside all approaches and outdated thinking. We must challenge ourselves to be creative and to do nothing less than imagine the new federation and the new Canada.

I have no doubt that when we conclude this meeting there will be those outside this room who will not be satisfied. This refrain plays in the

background of every bold leap and brave step forward. I have my critics. I am sure you have noticed. Mr. Prime Minister, I understand that even you on occasion have your critics.

--- Laughter / Rires

CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE (AFN): Now, where did the rest of my speech go? It disappeared somewhere in all this organization.

--- Laughter / Rires

CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE (AFN): I just wanted to express my thanks to all who have made it possible for us to be gathered here in this historic and fundamentally important meeting.

I believe we will satisfy everyone eventually because we will have created better homes, healthier communities, stronger citizens that live and breathe the spirit and intent of their treaties, strong, revitalized self-governing nations that care for their citizens and a country that can serve as a model for the rest of the world.

The fact is that sometimes the hardest thing to do is to say yes because fundamental change can create fear and fear leads to paralysis. However, through your leadership, Prime Minister, as well as that of Minister Scott and Premier Campbell, Premier Calvert, Premier Doer and other good Premiers present here, together with the willing involvement of all of the First

Nations, it is my sincere hope that we are all brave enough and bold enough to say yes, yes to a new beginning and yes to a better future.

--- Native language spoken /

Langue autochtone parlée

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Chief. It will not go unnoticed that as soon as you referred to my critics your speech disappeared in a puff of smoke.

--- Laughter / Rires

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: I would now call on Jose Kusugak, President, Inuit Tapiirit Kanatami.

MR. JOSE KUSUGAK (ITK): Thank you, Prime Minister.

--- Native language spoken /

Langue autochtone parlée

Mr. Prime Minister, Premiers, fellow Aboriginal leaders, Ministers, Elders, ladies and gentlemen, I am here today on behalf of Inuit in Canada, our specific issues, our distinct language and culture and our distinct place in Canada.

As Premier Klein kindly introduced some of his delegation, I would like to do the same because I am joined by Inuit leaders from four land claim regions: Duane Smith, representing the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation; Pita Aatima, President of the



Makivik Corporation in Quebec; Paul Kaludjak, President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated; William Anderson III, President of the Labrador Inuit Association; Mary Palliser, President of Pauktuutit; and Jason Tologanak, President of the National Inuit Youth Council.

Inuit may be small in numbers but we are large in geographic and political terms. Our land claims jurisdiction covers an area larger than Ontario and Quebec combined.

In preparing for and participating in this meeting of First Ministers, Inuit are reminded of the historic achievements in 1982 when First Ministers entrenched the rights of Inuit, Indians and Métis in Canada's Constitution.

For Inuit, it isn't easy to embrace Canada because we see ourselves in the Canadian Constitution, but unlike the Constitution, we have not been able to see ourselves in the government policy-making.

Canada claims it long ago rejected the melting pot ideology and embraced a multicultural society. However, Inuit must constantly remind public policy-makers and media that Inuit are not First Nations, that Aboriginal Canadians are not one people any more than all Europeans are one people.

Prime Minister, for Inuit a distinction-based approach is the foundation to pursue

your wish for a renewed relationship.

The FMM main documents showed a more effective framework for Inuit to work with federal, provincial and territorial governments and other Aboriginal leaders on national priorities and approaches. It also adopts a distinction-based working relationship with the federal government and the two provinces and two territories in which Inuit have settled claims.

The new relationship will be more effective and practical because the structures will include only those jurisdictions who best understand the linguistic, cultural, geographic, economic, health and environment realities that shape our communities.

Prime Minister and Premiers, we congratulate you for your commitment in closing the gap between ourselves and other Canadians, as Premier Klein also said, over a 10-year period. It is a vast improvement over previous federal policy that forecast two generations to close the gap.

Although it is true that closing the gap will mean a better life for Inuit, we will always insist that there could be no gap between ourselves and other Canadians. We must work with you all to eliminate the gap.

We look forward to the day when Canada is once again first in the United Nations Human Health Index but this time with Inuit on par with other

Canadians rather than on par with people in the third world.

Prime Minister and premiers, we will reach our mutual objectives if we remain focused on the issues before us: clear commitments and financial obligations to address our housing crisis, actions to improve our health and investment in education are paramount.

I remember at our first meeting in April of 2004, Prime Minister, you said that we must set clear goals and measure progress.

The best way of doing that is working in an open, transparent and accountable way through First Ministers meetings. That is why I fully agree with Premier Campbell and recommend we need to agree to meet twice more in the next five years, not just to assess progress on the issues before us today but to fully address other key priorities such as economic opportunities and environment.

Surely, First Ministers and national leaders must recognize the value of this process. I know I do.

For Inuit, this meeting has produced a commitment for desperately needed houses. We have broad commitments to improve Inuit education. We seek commitments to improve health services that only months ago seemed distant. Unfortunately, as we begin, we all

know the health blueprint is uncertain.

The federal, territorial and provincial governments may not be able to resolve fundamental differences in funding and jurisdiction and we as Inuit are caught in the middle.

We will not be able to improve the health outcomes you spoke about today, Prime Minister, if federal, territorial and provincial governments insist on putting their interests first.

On a hopeful note though, meetings of First Ministers and Aboriginal leaders provide a forum to resolve these conflicts, making these meetings even more imperative.

Together, we have found and developed solutions. We have found systems that work. Prime Minister and Premiers, we must keep it.

--- Native language spoken /

Langue autochtone parlée

MR. JOSE KUSUGAK (ITK): In English it means it is never the wrong time to do the right thing.

Thank you, sir.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Jose.

I now ask Clément Chartier, President, Métis National Council.

MR. CLÉMENT CHARTIER (MNC): Thank

you, Mr. Prime Minister.

Greetings to all Elders, Aboriginal citizens, support staff and politicians of all of the parties at the table here today, and of course, the First Ministers.

On behalf of the Métis Nation, I begin by saying how pleased we are to be participating in this type of meeting at the highest political level. Our full cabinet is here and some of our ministers will be sharing in our presentations.

Rosemarie McPherson, Chairperson of the Women of the Métis Nation, was unable to attend and sends both her regrets and her greetings.

I commend you, Prime Minister, for having the vision and, quite frankly, the courage to call this meeting. First Ministers meetings, by their very nature, are never easy.

Within this meeting, First Ministers have additional government perspectives that must be addressed, namely those of the three constitutionally recognized Aboriginal peoples. Without a doubt, we have our work cut out for us.

This meeting requires boldness, vision and compromise in order to be a success. This meeting cannot be a one-hit wonder if we are to make real progress on transforming the relationships and achieving results.

With this in mind, today and tomorrow, the Métis Nation will be pushing for a commitment that more of these meetings be held over the next decade in order to measure our progress and be held to account for the collective commitments we hope and believe will be made at this meeting. We are open to discuss what that process will look like as we move forward.

The Métis Nation, as one of the constitutionally recognized Aboriginal peoples, has a distinct culture, a unique language, Michif, which you heard our Elders speak, and democratic self-government structures.

Our traditional territory spans the Prairies and extends into Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the northern United States.

For generations, we have proudly contributed to the building of this great country and have sought the implementation of the Métis right of self-government within the Canadian federation. Unfortunately, since the birth of Canada, the Métis have always had difficulty securing our rightful place within this federation.

We have struggled with Canada on the battlefield, in the political arena and in the courts to defend our nationhood, our lands, our rights and our culture.

John A. McDonald had one vision for

Canada. It was one that did not include the Métis Nation. To this end, his government and successive Canadian governments have implemented and sustained policies of deception, dispossession and denial against our people. The effects of these deception and dispossession policies towards the Métis still linger today.

From the shameful and ongoing breach of Canada's treaty with the Métis as part of the Manitoba Act to a fraudulent script system that dispossessed us of our lands, it is no wonder that so many of our communities are on life support today.

Mr. Prime Minister, Premiers, these deception and dispossession policies are complemented by ones of denial, denial of jurisdiction to deal with the Métis, denial of Métis rights, denial of the very existence of the Métis as a people.

The effects of these denial policies still permeate the Métis reality in Canada.

Our children are denied early learning and child care approaches to assist them in their unique development needs.

Our communities are increasingly denied access to resources that their local economies are built on, including traditional trapping, fishing and gathering industries which require immediate attention.

Our veterans are denied the respect

and compensation that they so rightly deserve for defending this country as well as the free world as we know it today.

Our harvesters cannot exercise their right to harvest for food without fearing charges and prosecution.

First Ministers, the denials must stop. I am optimistic that this meeting is an important turning point for our people. However, as we move forward together, we must build upon section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

In the recent Powley decision, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the promise to the Métis. Section 35 was intended to be a framework for us to sit down and work things out together. It was not to be used as a tool to push things to the courts to decide.

At its heart, it provides us a framework for moving forward on a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis.

Pan-Aboriginal approaches cannot continue to be used as a way to stifle the implementation of self-government for First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation. The Métis Nation is encouraged that there is movement within some jurisdictions towards beginning to fulfil the promise of section 35 to the Métis Nation.

Prime Minister, I want to commend your government's efforts in supporting our work following the



release of the Powley decision. I must say, you have a good team of ministers and I am proud to have been working with Minister Scott and the other ministers on these most important issues.

We believe your government represents a new era of renewal and hope for the Métis Nation, an era where John A. McDonald's policies of deception, dispossession and denial are left in the past.

The recently signed Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement is an important recognition of the Métis Nation by the Crown. Again, as we said on May 31, we thank you for that bold step, that recognition of our people.

Further, the framework agreement provides a starting point for strengthening our bilateral relationship and moving towards implementing negotiation processes that will begin to address Métis self-government, a land base for Métis and outstanding claims.

Premier Klein, and to be absolutely clear this year, I want to thank you and your government for entering into an interim Métis Harvesting Agreement with the Métis Nation of Alberta.

I want to reflect on your words earlier. We also thank you for your government in the 1930s setting aside land desperately needed by our people in that province.

Alberta did the right thing with the

interim agreement last year. They did the right thing in the 1930s. Alberta has done the honourable thing.

We hope that at our next meeting we will have more success stories across the Métis Nation homeland.

Premiers Calvert, Campbell, Doer, McGuinty, your governments need to work with us and adopt policies to recognize the rights of our people and, where entered into, to respect and honour agreements.

Our people are rightfully becoming increasingly frustrated. Our people respect the laws of this land. However, these laws must be consistent with the Constitution of this land.

I am asking you, Mr. Prime Minister and Premiers, from Ontario west, to commit that within the next 12 months that you charge your ministers responsible for Aboriginal affairs and natural resources to meet with our leadership, the leadership of the Métis Nation, in order to discuss Métis harvesting and lands and resources issues.

We hope that the prospect of this meeting will provide a much needed kick-start for the provinces to address Métis rights and to begin to fulfil the promises contained in section 35, the promises made to our people.

Prime Minister, you have set out some very ambitious goals for us, collectively us. Our people

see hope in your bold vision and believe this meeting will indeed be a turning point.

We believe that under your continued leadership, coupled with the cooperation of other First Ministers, we are on a path that will achieve a real and meaningful improvement in the health and well-being of our people as well as secure the rightful place of the Métis Nation in this great country we all call home -- and I just want to say what my speech writers took out -- and we look forward to working with you in the next four years.

--- Laughter / Rires

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Clem. I have to say, your jacket is very nice but I think mine is nicer.

--- Laughter / Rires

MR. CLÉMENT CHARTIER (MNC): Mr. Prime Minister, I agree with you. They made it absolutely clear, they said that type of jacket is for statesmen. So far, besides yourself, it is President Poitras and President Chartrand that have those. So implicitly --

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Clem.

I now call on Chief Dwight Dorey, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

CHIEF DWIGHT DOREY (CAP): Elders,

Prime Minister, our host Premier Campbell, First Ministers, fellow leaders, delegates, observers, I would like to just take a moment also to acknowledge our veterans, lest we forget, this nearing the end of the year of the veterans.

I would like to first of all begin by introducing my national board of community leaders across the country: Mr. Patrick Brazeau, National Vice-President of CAP; Lillian George from here in British Columbia with the United Native Nations; Larry Wucherer from the Aboriginal Council of Manitoba; Mike McGuire, the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association; Mr. Carl Dubé from the Native Alliance of Quebec; Betty-Ann Lavalley, New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council; Grace Conrad, the Native Council of Nova Scotia; Jamie Gallant, the Native Council of Prince Edward Island; Chris Monaghue(ph), the Labrador Métis Nation; and Randy Drover(ph), our National Youth Council and representing the Federation of Newfoundland Indians.

I want to thank you, Prime Minister Martin, for your vision and courage in launching a year and a half ago what, as you know, as we all know, would be a very difficult challenge and one that would face many obstacles in this process. Your perseverance and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of all Aboriginal Canadians has been deeply appreciated certainly by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

I also want to thank our host Premier Gordon Campbell, not only for such terrific B.C. hospitality but also for the extensive efforts toward making this conference here a success. I am sure it has been a challenging job for you in your cross-country visit with Premiers and other national Aboriginal leaders. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

Today marks yet another step in a journey we have been embarking upon for the past year and a half. It has been a difficult journey in many ways for some of us.

To be sure, the end objective we all have been sharing is to better the lives of Canada's Aboriginal peoples but the difficulty has been getting to this point with so many jurisdictions and national Aboriginal organizations involved, with so many often complicated issues before us and with so many competing interests at play.

Of all the national Aboriginal organizations in this room, the ones who have experienced the greatest number of roadblocks by far have been the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, which in itself reflects the degree of transformative change that is required.

The adoption of the narrow distinction-based approaches that have been the overwhelming focus of the past 18 months or so has been

at the root of this problem because by nature and by design it has had the effect of largely excluding the Aboriginal rights and very real needs of a substantial portion of the population here in Canada of Aboriginal people, and in fact the majority.

As well, jurisdictional issues such as 91-24 need to be resolved here and now, not in the courts. I remind everybody that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples -- take it out, dust it off -- it elaborates on that fundamental issue.

Premier Campbell has noted the need for bold, not timid steps. The notion that somehow the terms First Nation, Métis and Inuit, as used throughout the roundtable, and now to this process, covers the Aboriginal population in Canada just hasn't been coming through.

That is not opinion, that is a demonstrable fact. Why? Because it does not fairly and equitably accommodate some 400,000 non-status Indians, a large portion of the 120,000 Bill C-31 Indian population, approximately 30,000 status Indians without band recognition, such as the Mitchell Band right here in Alberta, nor a very sizeable Métis population throughout Canada who do not fit within the Métis National Council concept of Métis peoples or nation.

Aboriginal women in every province and territory, regardless of their status, is also an issue.

It is also CAP's position that true First Nations are the Cree, the Mi'kmaw, the Algonquin, Haida, Dene, and so on, and not just First Nations communities on reserve.

Both the Congress and the Native Women's Association of Canada have been fighting tooth and nail for months on end to rectify this shameful exclusion.

Mr. co-chairs, my purpose in being here today as one of the five national Aboriginal leaders is really not to complain or to be negative but to find resolutions to the issues before us in health, education, housing, economic opportunities and in relationships.

In doing so, we politicians must come to ground in making sure they accommodate the needs of all Aboriginal peoples in Canada, not just some that fit within the narrow definitions that I described a moment ago.

We do need to talk about land rights and access to natural resources by all communities. That is our most important job here today, in my humble opinion.

Premier Campbell also spoke of true partners, equal access and mutual respect. I suggest that we demonstrate those in principle.

My hope is that we will acquit ourselves well because the people deserve no less no matter what their status or where they reside.

We all recognize and realize that the pending election campaign is not good news because it further delays the progress we have been making and, depending on the results, may bring us to a complete halt.

So we must press forward because the stakes are too high and the cost of failure too awful to even contemplate.

Let me be clear. The Congress and I believe also the Native Women's Association of Canada feel the same and is in full and unequivocal support of any initiatives that serve the constituency base of the AFN, the ITK and the MNC. We sincerely want them to receive the benefits of their place in Canadian society that they so deservedly need and enjoy the successes that other Canadians take for granted.

I have said so repeatedly at every one of our roundtable meetings as well as at the Canada-Aboriginal Summit and on every other occasion I have had the opportunity to do so. I say it again today with the same passion and conviction as I have throughout. Again, if we are serious about a better life for Aboriginal peoples, we have to be serious about a better life for all Aboriginal peoples.

We tried for the past year and a half to find a way to do this. We endured the nonsensical notion that off reserve, non reserve and Aboriginal



women's issues would be cross-cutting, that is, being covered by the themes of First of Nations, Métis and Inuit-specific sessions. Well, that bombed and the evidence is there in the reports of the official meetings.

More recently, we feel we have become a tagalong group to the so-called distinction-based First Nations, Métis and Inuit-specific processes. Merely changing the label from non-status to non-distinct, which to me sounds even more negative and derogatory, is another bomb and a potentially new category for human rights case files.

Being part of a process where you are not welcome is not a solution.

That leaves us with an answer we have proposed from the outset but that has fallen on deaf ears to this point.

For want of a better expression, let's call it a fourth forum, one that is designated specifically to address the very real needs of the largest and most neglected Aboriginal population off reserve, the non-status and the bandless treaty Indians and Métis living in rural, urban and remote areas throughout Canada.

Too many endure the same deplorable conditions as our brothers and sisters on reserve. They live in different venues, like alleyways in Vancouver's

downtown east side, subway vents in Winnipeg and other cities, in garbage dumps in Red Lake, Ontario, in off-reserve communities like Black Tickle in Labrador where people have to carry clean water in pails, and for brief spells in homeless shelters, rehab centres or jail cells throughout the country.

Harry Daniels often said that skid row is the longest street in Canada, it stretches from coast to coast to coast and cuts through cities, towns, villages, forests, hamlets, mountains and flatlands. That is where too many of our people live and die.

We need a fourth forum because these same people are not being served by the existing distinction-based approaches and we see no evidence that they will.

We the Congress of Aboriginal People and the Native Women's Association of Canada, along with existing and new Aboriginal service providers, offer a welcoming environment that respects their Aboriginal rights and we are committed to addressing their very real needs.

What we need is your agreement today that we take immediate steps to create this fourth forum and marshal the forces, some of who are right outside this room on the street. These are ones with whom we have established relationships over the years and who are ready to move forward. All we need to do is agree to

work out the details.

This will take absolutely nothing away from the existing distinction-based national Aboriginal organizations and the work that they have proposed to do or will undertake. It will be the first real step in beginning to properly and truly serve the massive Aboriginal population base, the one that we call the forgotten people.

In closing, let me just say it has been said that you can't please everyone. But in regards to closing the gap, my friends, in this process, I argue that yes, you can simply by mutual respect with no gaps, equal access with no gaps and inclusive partnerships with no gaps.

(Native language spoken). Merci.

Thank you very much.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Dwight.

I would now ask Beverly Jacobs, Native Women's Association of Canada.

MS BEVERLY JACOBS (NWAC): (Native language spoken) I bring greetings of peace to all of you and introduce you in my language, my name, my clan name, which is (native language spoken), and that means she is visiting. So I am here visiting you today to acknowledge the existence of women at this table.

First of all, I would also like to acknowledge the Elders here, all Elders who are here, and the Elders of this territory, and acknowledge the people of this Okanagan territory for allowing us to have this historical meeting here today and tomorrow.

This is actually a very historic day for the Native Women's Association of Canada. The organization is 32 years old and this is the first time that Aboriginal women are sitting at this table, and as you can see, the only Aboriginal woman sitting at this table.

We wish to take this opportunity to celebrate this achievement and embrace the respect that this acknowledgement surrounds Aboriginal women in. So we thank everyone for that opportunity.

We know that this is also a very historic meeting. Not only is it the first time that governments at all levels are at the table with Aboriginal peoples of this country to create a plan to end poverty, we have collectively set an ambitious agenda of closing this socio-economic gap and there is cultural diversity that exists between our nations.

It is tremendous but I think it is safe to say that we have all been affected by colonization, a history of colonialism and that those impacts affect all of us.

We have a related lived contemporary

reality of facing poverty. This is what makes this process so critical to our women and to all Aboriginal peoples in violence.

We do welcome this new partnership that can be formed here to reverse our collective history and move forward on a positive path of improving the lives of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

As you know, our request to have violence on the agenda has not happened. We had asked specifically to have violence on the agenda so that we can ensure that that is the most basic socio-economic issue affecting Aboriginal women in this country.

We also began this process a year and a half ago, and acknowledging the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, we went through this process going through the sectoral tables, focusing on First Nations, Inuit and Métis with a gender lens and an urban lens.

We had requested at that time to have a women-specific table to deal with all of these issues, but then at that time we thought, okay, let us see what happens. Let us see what happens in this process and see if our issues are being addressed at those tables. Unfortunately, we feel that they have not.

In the documents, in the processes, it has been a constant struggle to ensure that Aboriginal women's voices are heard and that they are implemented

throughout the process.

We want specifically to have an Aboriginal women's summit to deal with all of these issues, including violence and justice -- justice because there is an over-representation of Aboriginal women in federal and provincial prisons.

Violence itself is something that we have been addressing and something that needs to be dealt with in all First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and Canadian societies. We know that this is a challenge but it is something that needs to be done. We want to also acknowledge that even though we are sitting at this table, there are voices out there who are not being heard.

We have to also acknowledge our sisters from the Quebec Native Women's Association who have not supported this process. They have made the decision to support the Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador not to take part in this initiative.

We acknowledge those who are not able to fully participate in this process because it reminds us that the human rights that we are bringing to this table must underlie any strategies for improvement if they are to be successful.

We are here today in the spirit of cooperation and we come here with open hearts and open

minds and a willingness to continue the dialogue on the many issues specific to Aboriginal women. These issues need to be addressed in order to close the gap.

We as women acknowledging who we are as Aboriginal women, and being aunts, mothers, sisters and looking at what we represent in our Aboriginal communities and being the backbone of our communities, if our women are unhealthy in our communities, our children are unhealthy and our families are unhealthy and our communities are unhealthy.

We want to make sure that our ancestral laws, our spiritual beliefs and our languages and our traditions that are given to us by the Creator are acknowledged in everything that we do.

It is in this manner that we approach our work on behalf of all of our women on key issues such as violence against women, racial and gender discrimination, women's physical and mental health and factors leading to women's economic survival and social well-being.

We also want to ensure that there are culturally relevant gender-based analyses to all policies, programs and services.

When we are talking about culturally relevant, we are talking about the balance that exists between men and women. That has been part of our traditions and our cultures, that there has always been a

balance between men and women.

At this point, there is none because there is still inequality, there is violence. There are issues that need to be addressed in our communities. We cannot be ignored anymore and we won't be. We need to ensure that all of the services are holistic-thinking in looking at the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional well-being in everything that we do.

In looking at specific issues of violence, we do acknowledge that we have received our funding for Sisters in Spirit and thank the federal government for acknowledging the racialized and sexualized violence against Aboriginal women. It is a very significant process that we have to now begin to deal with these issues. But again, it is only one very small issue that is being addressed because violence is more than that.

When Aboriginal women are specific targets of violence, which is what the Sisters in Spirit is addressing, it is not addressing family violence, it is not addressing all other violence that is occurring in our communities.

Helen Betty Osbourne was an Aboriginal woman from The Pas in Manitoba 30 years ago. It was 1971 when she was murdered. The only reason why she was murdered is because she was an Aboriginal woman. Thirty-four years later, her cousin is found murdered and her



body parts were found in the Red River. When you have those issues that are not being addressed, that is something that needs to occur today, now.

There was another woman yesterday that was in the news. She was found missing along the Highway of Tears. We have to acknowledge her and her family, Tamara Chipman. She was found missing along the Highway of Tears. This is an issue that is occurring every day.

Another woman was murdered yesterday, Tasha Rosette, in Surrey, B.C.

This is a very critical issue that needs to be addressed and I can't overemphasize how much we need to deal with this critical issue.

We do know that Amnesty International in their report questioned: How many more Aboriginal sisters and daughters must we lose?

Also, the UN Human Rights Committee met to review Canada's compliance with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights only to find serious deficiencies in respect to the rights and welfare of Aboriginal men and women in Canada.

We want to also ask and request that there be a national inquiry into the reasons why there are missing and murdered Aboriginal women in this country. What are the police doing? What is the Ministry of Public Safety who is supposed to provide

safety to Aboriginal women in this country doing to address this? Those are our questions.

With the Native Women's Association of Canada being at this table with our very limited capacity and resources, we have brought these issues forward. We have contributed to the activities that have led up to this meeting. It has been a challenge. However, we are up for the challenge and we will continue to address these issues.

We must also be able to not only have our voices at this table but to be actively involved in the outcomes and evaluation frameworks to ensure that Aboriginal gender-based analysis, culturally relevant gender-based analysis, is included in everything.

We as Aboriginal women have made a huge contribution to Canada. We have indeed made some headway.

We have to congratulate Senator Sandra Lovelace and Lillian Dyck, two Aboriginal women who have overcome oppression and hardship to sit in positions of authority in the Senate.

Acknowledging our successes reminds us that systemic and attitudinal changes are indeed possible. However, this demands perseverance, resources and support of our organizations and Aboriginal organizations.

We continue to bring Aboriginal women

together to recognize their strengths and capacities and more significantly to identify and work towards meeting their unique needs in meaningful ways.

This two-day meeting is not only a celebration. It is a time to forge ahead and enhance federal and Aboriginal partnerships with the provision of tangible action plans that benefit all of us.

"Nia:wen". Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Beverly.

May I just say that the points you have raised are very powerful. The issues of violence against women and health, my understanding is, are to be raised in both the housing section of our discussions as well as the health section if needed, and I suspect it will be obviously needed, in the area dealing with moving forward.

That being said, I have also just consulted with the minister and we both agree that a special table on Aboriginal violence against women is one that is obviously a worthwhile suggestion and we will take you up on that.

We will now proceed to the interventions by the individual Premiers. I would turn to Premier McGuinty of Ontario.

HON. DALTON MCGUINTY (Ontario): Prime

Minister, fellow Premiers, fellow leaders representing First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Aboriginal women and Aboriginal peoples living off reserve.

I want to begin, Prime Minister, by thanking you for convening a summit that is dedicated entirely to bringing about measurable improvement and quality of life for Aboriginal Canadians.

I want to thank my colleague Gordon Campbell for his Olympian efforts -- I thought he would be fond of that particularly descriptive, Olympian efforts -- at laying the foundation for success here.

I also am pleased and proud to be joined today by representatives of the Ontario Aboriginal leadership and, in particular, by Regional Chief of the Chiefs of Ontario, Angus Toulouse; by the President of the Métis Nation of Ontario, Tony Belcourt; the President of the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association, Michael McGuire; and by the President of the Ontario Native Women's Association, Dawn Harbour.

It seems to me that the air in this room today is thick with hope, so much so that you can almost reach out and grab it. It has been said that hope springs eternal, but my favourite definition of hope was written by Juan Wordsworth. He said that hope is the everlasting duty that heaven lays for its own sake on mankind's suffering heart.

I love that particular notion of hope

because it speaks to a duty, an obligation, a responsibility. It seems to me that we, each of us here today, are impressed with a heavy responsibility to find success for Canada by finding success for our Aborigines.

To that end, let me say that Ontario is here to work with everyone here to make a real difference, to achieve real results, to make a major step towards a higher quality of life for all Aboriginal peoples in Canada and to deliver on the plan that we have all been working on.

With this many leaders and this many journalists in one place, there is no doubt we are going to make some headlines, that is a given, but our mission is to do more than just that.

Notre responsabilité est de faire des progrès réels, concrets et durables. Nous le devons aux descendants des tous premiers peuples du Canada pour améliorer leur qualité de vie.

But we need to do this as well because it will make all Canadians stronger.

I recently had the privilege of leading an Ontario trade mission to China. It made me proud to be Canadian. It was a reminder of all that Canada has to offer the world. But it also drove home the fact that in the 21st century, Canada needs to be at its very best if we are going to compete with the world

and partner with the world.

For Canada to be at its best, our people, all of our people, have to be at their very best. Our people, 32 million Canadians, can take on the world. We can compete and partner with a country of 1.3 billion but only if we are 32 million strong.

Growing up in a family of 12, I learned a couple of important rules. Rule number one, never show up late for dinner. Rule number two, when we pulled in separate directions, we accomplished nothing but when we pulled together, we felt like 24 and not like 12. It is time for us to pull together, clearly.

The Aboriginal community in Canada has not been provided the same strong foundations for success as other Canadians. We know that on just about any measure of educational attainment or health indicator, they do worse than other Canadians. We know that far too many Aboriginal people in Canada live in conditions that are, in a word, deplorable.

Academics sometimes describe this as a gap in socio-economic outcomes. I prefer to call it a gap in quality of life. Canadians, we know, call it something else, unacceptable.

Our task here today, and in the weeks and months ahead, is to start closing that gap in a real and measurable way, not simply by making an announcement or attaching a dollar figure but by ensuring that any

agreement we reach, any amount that is allocated, actually gets results, not just for some Aboriginal peoples but for all Aboriginal peoples.

I personally was moved by conditions in Kesheshewan and so were my fellow Ontarians. I know others in this room have had experiences that make it painfully clear to all of us that a better job must be done on behalf of Aboriginal people living on reserves. But you can't heal a family by isolating one part of it. We can't make real progress for Aboriginal people if we fail the thousands of Aboriginal people living in our cities.

The urban Aboriginal population in Ontario continues to grow. A very high percentage -- we are closing in on 80 per cent -- now living off reserve live in Ontario. Canada's circle of opportunity must be widened to include Aboriginal peoples living on reserve and off reserve.

In Ontario, we know progress is attainable through a genuine collaboration between government and Aboriginal peoples.

Just look at our alternative secondary schools that now exist in eight native friendship centres. As of June, 634 Aboriginal students received their secondary school graduation diploma through this program. This puts these students in a stronger position to start the next stage of their lives.

Ontario's Aboriginal healing and wellness strategy is another example we are very proud of. This strategy integrates traditional Aboriginal health practices with western approaches to medicine, with better results.

Our government is committed to creating a new era in the province's relationship with Aboriginal peoples. We launched our new approach to Aboriginal affairs earlier this year. Its goal is to build a relationship based on mutual respect and create a better future for all Aboriginal peoples.

Our new approach calls for working with Aboriginal peoples to build partnerships, collaborate on key initiatives and achieve real progress on shared goals.

Je sais bien que mes collègues de l'ensemble du pays partagent ces objectifs, et je sais que nous partageons tous l'opinion que nous avons besoin d'un plan d'action.

Shakespeare said that action is eloquence. It is time for us to be eloquent. To that end, we are going to need a solid plan.

I believe that with the goals you have just articulated, Prime Minister, we indeed have the makings of such a plan.

Today and tomorrow we can in fact do more than just make headlines. We can be eloquent. We



can in a very real way start to make a better future for all Aboriginal peoples in Canada and that will make all Canadians stronger.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you, Premier McGuinty.

Je demanderais maintenant au premier ministre Charest de prendre la parole.

M. JEAN CHAREST : Merci, Monsieur le Premier ministre.

Monsieur le Président du Conseil de la Fédération, Monsieur le Premier ministre de la Colombie-Britannique et chers collègues, Monsieur le Chef national de l'Assemblée des Premières Nations, Monsieur le Président de l'Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Monsieur le Président du Ralliement national des Métis, Monsieur le Chef national du Congrès des Peuples autochtones, Madame la Présidente de l'Association des Femmes autochtones du Canada, et je veux à mon tour saluer les Anciens qui sont avec nous aujourd'hui, qui nous honorent de leur présence, également les autres Chefs autochtones, délégués, observateurs.

Monsieur le Premier ministre, je veux joindre ma voix à ceux de mes collègues pour vous féliciter et vous remercier d'avoir confié cette conférence sur les enjeux autochtones et d'avoir eu

l'initiative et l'intuition de nous réunir afin que nous puissions aborder les enjeux qui sont d'une première importance à la fois pour le Québec, oui, mais aussi pour tout le Canada.

Je veux aussi remercier mon collègue de la Colombie-Britannique, Gordon Campbell, qui a fait un travail colossal pour préparer cette conférence. Il nous a visités individuellement. Il nous a consacré à nous, ses collègues, et à moi en particulier au Québec, beaucoup de temps afin que nous puissions arriver bien préparés pour cette conférence.

Alors, nous sommes réunis aujourd'hui pour relever un des défis les plus importants auquel fait face la société canadienne, soit celui de combler l'écart socio-économique qui sépare les autochtones du reste de la population du Canada.

On pourrait même qualifier ce défi comme étant probablement un des grands défis du siècle actuel, qui mettra à l'épreuve nos valeurs, notre volonté comme pays, de vivre dans une société de justice sociale, une société d'inclusion.

Au départ, Monsieur le Premier ministre et chers collègues, mesdames et messieurs, je dois vous informer que les représentants de l'Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador et des Femmes autochtones du Québec ont choisi de ne pas participer à cette conférence. Monsieur le Chef Fontaine

y faisait référence.

J'ai eu l'occasion de les rencontrer il y a quelques jours et je veux vous dire d'emblée que le gouvernement du Québec respecte cette décision.

Je ne suis donc pas surpris de celle-ci, étant donné que dans cette rencontre que j'ai eue avec Ghislain Picard, qui est de l'Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador, que j'ai eue également avec Hélène Gabriel des Femmes autochtones du Québec, avec Max Gros-Louis de la Nation hurone, et Gilbert Dominique, un jeune Chef de la communauté innue de Mashteuiatsh, qu'ils m'ont informé à ce moment qu'ils préféreraient ne pas être ici.

A assisté également à cette rencontre Pita Aatima, qui est Président de Makivik, qui est avec nous aujourd'hui, avec la communauté inuit.

Je respecte cette décision, et peut-être faudrait-il prendre le temps de dire qu'il est normal de temps en temps dans une communauté, faite de diversité, que des opinions différentes s'expriment.

Je tiens quand même à reprendre les raisons qui les ont motivés à choisir d'être absents. Ils craignent que l'exercice se prête à un délaissage de la part du gouvernement fédéral de ses responsabilités vers d'autres paliers de gouvernement.

En cela, Monsieur le Premier ministre, je dois vous dire que c'est une préoccupation légitime

que nous partageons. Nous aurons sans doute l'occasion d'en discuter, mais je tenais quand même à le dire à voix haute puisque c'est l'inquiétude qu'ils ont manifestée.

As I have said just a minute ago, the fact that the First Nations of Quebec and the women who have chosen not to attend today is one that the Government of Quebec respects and understands.

Given the diversity of our native communities throughout all of Canada, maybe we should acknowledge that it is not surprising that some of them would have a different point of view and would choose to have a different approach and we should respect that.

Les conditions de vie sont préoccupantes à plusieurs égards dans les communautés autochtones du Québec. Comme nous le savons, des problèmes de décrochage scolaire, de chômage, ainsi que plusieurs autres problématiques sociales sont proportionnellement plus fréquentes dans les communautés autochtones que dans le reste de la population.

Face à cette situation, nous devons, en tant que gouvernements et dirigeants responsables, agir pour changer les choses, et ce, de façon durable.

Loin de partir à zéro, le Québec, depuis déjà longtemps, porte une attention particulière aux besoins spécifiques des communautés autochtones. Notre engagement est positif et notre approche proactive à l'égard des nations autochtones vivant sur le

territoire québécois, et ils sont constants depuis de nombreuses années.

En 1975, le gouvernement du Québec signait le premier traité moderne au Canada avec la Convention de la Baie-James et du Nord Québécois, qui traduisait une prise de conscience collective des intérêts et des droits autochtones sur le développement du territoire québécois.

Elle fut suivie en 1978 par la Convention du Nord-Est Québécois.

L'adoption par le gouvernement québécois, en 1983, de 15 principes relatifs aux relations avec les Nations autochtones et, en 1985 et en 1989, de résolutions de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec a officialisé la reconnaissance par le Québec des nations autochtones et a structuré les relations du gouvernement avec celles-ci.

Les gestes posés par le gouvernement du Québec sont significatifs, pleins de signification, oui, mais reflètent aussi l'importance que nous accordons à nos relations avec les peuples autochtones.

En plus de nombreuses ententes sectorielles conclues entre le Québec et les Nations autochtones, certaines initiatives particulièrement porteuses méritent d'être soulignées ici.

Je pense, d'abord, à l'Entente politique et économique globale signée en février 2002

avec les Cris de la Baie-James. Cette Entente historique, que nous avons surnommée la Paix des Braves, marque une nouvelle ère dans les relations entre le Québec et la Nation crie.

Elle a été suivie deux mois plus tard, en avril 2002, par la signature de l'Entente de partenariat Sanarrutik sur le développement économique et communautaire entre le Québec et les Inuits de Nunavik.

Des discussions ont eu, par ailleurs, cours entre la société Makivik, représentée par Pita Aatima, le gouvernement québécois et le gouvernement fédéral, depuis la signature d'une entente cadre de négociation sur la fusion de certaines institutions et, je le souligne, la création d'une nouvelle forme de gouvernement au Nunavik, et cette entente date de juin 2003.

Autre initiative. Un Conseil conjoint des élus, qui se veut un lieu d'échanges politiques entre élus autochtones et non-autochtones, qui a entrepris ses travaux exploratoires en septembre 2003 suite à l'engagement politique mutuel signé par le gouvernement québécois et l'Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador.

Le 31 mars 2004, une Entente de principe d'ordre général est intervenue entre le Québec, le Canada et les Innus, couvrant l'ensemble des questions liées à la co-habitation des Innus et des populations

non-autochtones sur les territoires touchés et devant servir de base aux négociations pour l'éventuelle signature d'un traité.

De plus, le gouvernement québécois et l'Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador tiennent un important forum sur le développement social et économique des Premières Nations, avec la participation des Inuits, en 2006 à Mastouache, au Lac Saint-Jean, justement chez le Chef Gilbert Dominique.

Cet exercice unique qui va suivre la conférence que vous avez conviée, Monsieur le Premier ministre, et en cela, le timing ne pouvait pas être mieux, vise notamment à démontrer notre capacité à travailler ensemble, mais elle va également interpeller l'ensemble de la société québécoise.

Finalement, mon gouvernement travaille actuellement à l'élaboration d'une politique visant à améliorer et à formaliser la consultation et l'accommodement des Autochtones, notamment dans le développement des politiques gouvernementales.

L'approche du Québec à l'égard des Autochtones en est donc une de dialogue, de consultation, de négociation, et nous sommes fiers de dire aussi, de réalisation, et tout cela a été fait de nation à nation.

Le Québec, du fait de sa spécificité par rapport à l'ensemble canadien, est particulièrement sensible au respect des différences régionales et des

distinctions entre les nations autochtones du Canada. Notre expérience à nous, notre histoire à nous, nous amène à être très sensibles aux réalités de ces nations.

Le Québec travaille à faciliter l'accès aussi des Autochtones à son système de santé et de services sociaux, ainsi qu'à son système d'éducation. Toutefois, nos efforts ne doivent surtout pas soustraire à la responsabilité première du gouvernement fédéral à l'égard des Autochtones.

L'ensemble des mesures que nous allons prendre pour combler l'écart socio-économique qui sépare les Autochtones du reste de la population canadienne devrait être assorti de mécanismes de financement qui sont à la fois adéquats mais aussi durables.

Ottawa doit, à cet égard, remplir pleinement ses obligations constitutionnelles et fiduciaires à l'endroit des Autochtones en soutenant financièrement et de manière spécifique les provinces pour les services qu'elles rendent.

Le gouvernement fédéral devra investir de façon importante, nous croyons, dans les services aux Autochtones.

À cet égard, pour vous donner un exemple, Monsieur le Premier ministre, qui me touche directement parce que j'ai été jadis, dans une autre vie, un ministre fédéral de l'environnement, comment expliquer que les Inuits du Québec soient exclus de la Stratégie du



Nord, que vous avez convenue en 2004, par les Premiers Ministres du Canada, du Yukon, des Territoires-du-nord-ouest et du Nunavut?

Il ne nous apparaît pas équitable que le gouvernement fédéral établisse une stratégie pour le Nord canadien, et qui injecte des sommes supplémentaires, en excluant le nord du Québec, alors que, de toute évidence, notre géographie est là, au nord du 60e parallèle, que nous sommes nordiques dans cette partie de notre territoire et que le Québec devrait être inclu.

Cette conférence est, j'en suis convaincu, une occasion pour mettre en commun nos idées afin d'identifier des mesures qui nous permettront de combler l'écart socio-économique qui sépare depuis trop longtemps nos populations.

Dans cet esprit, le gouvernement du Québec continuera de privilégier les ententes négociées avec les Nations autochtones vivant au Québec, pour améliorer les conditions sociales et économiques.

Aujourd'hui, j'ai le sentiment, comme plusieurs d'entre vous, que nous franchissons une étape décisive qui nous conduira vers l'amélioration de la qualité de vie des Nations autochtones.

Un peu comme monsieur McGuinty vient de l'exprimer, c'est à nous finalement de décider si nous voulons marquer une page d'histoire, et cette page, elle est certainement à portée de main.

Je réitère l'engagement ferme du Québec de poursuivre ses efforts dans cette direction et de contribuer à la réussite de cette conférence.

Merci.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le Premier ministre. J'apprécie énormément la façon que vous avez présenté votre intervention.

Je pense que nous savons fort bien que nous avons tous nos responsabilités, que ce soit le gouvernement fédéral ou les gouvernements provinciaux, et on reconnaît clairement que la responsabilité primordiale, ça revient à nous.

Je crois que nous sommes ici, et la raison pour laquelle nous sommes ici, c'est à la demande, je dois vous dire, des Chefs autochtones, qui nous ont demandé, le gouvernement fédéral et les gouvernements provinciaux, de s'asseoir à la table avec eux pour atteindre des objectifs qui sont, comme vous venez de dire, pour franchir une nouvelle étape, et c'est la raison, et d'après ce que je peux voir, je pense que nous sommes vraiment sur la bonne voie. Merci.

Maintenant, je demanderais -- I would now ask Premier John Hamm of Nova Scotia.

HON. JOHN HAMM (N.S.): Thank you, Prime Minister.

Prime Minister, leaders, Elders, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, to you, Prime Minister, a thank you for the opportunity at this meeting for me to share with you views from our Nova Scotia Aboriginal leaders.

Before commencing my remarks, I wish to introduce a Mi'kmaq leader from Nova Scotia who has accompanied me to this conference.

Sitting behind me is Chief Terry Paul of Membertou First Nation. Chief Paul has become nationally recognized for the achievements on his reserve in Cape Breton.

Chief Lawrence Paul of Millbrook First Nation was also to accompany me but unfortunately an illness in his family has prevented him from attending this conference.

Chief Lawrence Paul was the architect of one of the most important business developments in our province. The Truro Power Centre is a burgeoning business park in central Nova Scotia employing several hundred people.

In Cape Breton, Chief Terry Paul's Membertou First Nation has become a national symbol of what can be achieved in economic development when people work together on a common goal. Membertou has successfully completed an economic turnaround in a few

short years that is the envy of many.

At the outset, I also want to acknowledge the collaborative work that has been done to produce the draft reports that form the underpinning for this most important conference.

This meeting is important in highlighting the issues facing Canada's Aboriginal communities. What is critically important is making sure we effect real change through concrete action.

This conference is not about government-imposed solutions. It is about governments listening, understanding and addressing the challenges we face in partnership with First Nations, with Métis and Inuit communities and their peoples.

In Nova Scotia, we have come a long way in laying the foundation for a positive, productive working relationship with both Canada and the Mi'kmaw. Our tripartite forum and made in Nova Scotia negotiation processes are allowing us to move forward. We are moving forward in education, housing, health and economic opportunity and we are addressing longstanding issues related to the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal and treaty rights.

In Nova Scotia, we share a common interest in building our economy from the pillars of conservation, sustainability, innovation and success. All of the issues we will discuss over the next two days

are interconnected. Therefore, the solutions must be holistic and flexible.

On the issue of Aboriginal health care, we in Nova Scotia are acutely aware of the concerns. High rates of diabetes, prescription drug misuse, the need for better access to mental health services. An immediate commitment to specific programs and a flexibility is required. The approach must fit regional and provincial needs.

Over several months, we in Nova Scotia collectively have prepared a blueprint which we call providing health care, achieving health, which now positions us with a plan that outlines how we can work together to tackle these problems. We have done this in collaboration with our First Nations partners and with our federal government and I look forward to our discussions on the blueprint.

I urge this meeting to address specific health initiatives with programs and achievable targets. It is 14 months since the special meeting of first ministers and Aboriginal leaders, a meeting dedicated to improving Aboriginal health. It is time to be specific.

In education, the Mi'kmaw model, which we will discuss in greater detail during our meeting, is an example for everyone in Canada. Still there is much to do. Graduation levels remain too low and we need to

more effectively address the needs of First Nations learners in our public school system.

We are working with the private sector as well as with our university and community college systems to ensure we are providing our young people with the tools and the opportunities they need to succeed.

Our approach provincially could easily dovetail with federal objectives and support.

Of all the subjects on our agenda, housing is the most basic and appears to be the most straightforward. It is also an area where there is a dire need for immediate action.

For too long, we have struggled with housing shortages and substandard housing both on and off reserve. We need a strong federal commitment to on-reserve housing and an expansion of social housing programs off reserve.

With respect to housing, Nova Scotia is prepared to work collaboratively with the Mi'kmaq and Canada to identify creative housing solutions. To that end, I have asked Minister Michael Baker, our Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, to open a separate table within the tripartite forum to discuss opportunities for housing solutions for Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia.

The two Chiefs I spoke of at the outset of my remarks are examples of what can be done in the area of economic development when we work together to

reduce unemployment and create opportunities for business.

Both Chiefs Terry and Lawrence Paul have turned the nature of the social economic challenges of First Nations communities on its head. Both Membertou and Millbrook are now seen as major economic contributors to Nova Scotia's economy. The private sector is anxious to work with these communities. We need to learn from their experience.

A future focus on economic development will result in much closer personal relationships that will inevitably need to mutual understanding, respect and lasting relationships with a common interest in building our future.

In conclusion, the challenge before us is tremendous. This discussion is about closing the social and economic gap. More importantly, however, it is about Aboriginal people attaining their place within Canada and building a stronger, more prosperous country. Let us now work together to build on what we have already achieved.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you,  
Premier Hamm.

I would just simply say one thing.  
This meeting is going to continue. We are going to be

going into tomorrow. I don't know, however, as this is the most public section, if I will have the chance at a public meeting -- and I know I speak for all of the other Premiers -- in which to say that we wish you the very, very best in your retirement when eventually it comes. --- Applause / Applaudissements

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : Le premier ministre Lord du Nouveau Brunswick.

HON. BERNARD LORD (N.B.): Thank you very much, Prime Minister.

Elders, fellow Premiers, Chiefs, leaders, representatives, ladies and gentlemen, mesdames et messieurs, bonjour.

First, I want to thank the Elders for their opening prayers and songs.

Prime Minister, I want to congratulate you for calling this meeting.

I also want to commend Gordon Campbell, Premier Campbell, for the work that you have done on our behalf. Thank you very much, Gordon.

Prime Minister, I also want to acknowledge the work of your minister, Andy Scott, who is my MP. I appreciate the work that he has done on this file.

If you allow me as well, Prime Minister, I also want to wish my wife happy birthday, it is her 40th birthday today, and that means a lot to me,



so I thought I would mention that as well.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. BERNARD LORD (N.B.): I am very honoured and very pleased to participate in this historic meeting in this new phase of our relationship with Canada's Aboriginal people as we chart a determined course of action to close the economic and social gaps that exist and are, frankly, unacceptable.

I want to recognize two New Brunswick Chiefs who are with me today at the table, Chief Susan Levi-Peters and Chief Noah Augustine, and I thank them for being here with me at this meeting.

À titre de Premier ministre du Nouveau-Brunswick, je représente les Autochtones et les non-Autochtones de notre pays qui co-habitent depuis le plus grand nombre d'années.

C'était en 1604 que les premiers Européens se sont établis au Canada, plus précisément à l'Île de Sainte-Croix aux côtes du Nouveau-Brunswick. En 1604, c'est l'accueil et l'entraide des Autochtones qui ont permis à ces premiers colons de survivre et de s'établir en Amérique du Nord.

Depuis ces premiers établissements, le Canada a avancé et évolué avec un succès économique combiné à un progrès social.

On a fait grand vent durant les dernières années que le Canada occupait le premier rang

mondial de l'indice du développement humain des Nations-Unies pendant six années consécutives, de 1995 à 2000. En 2004, nous nous classons quatrième des pays du monde en ce qui a trait à la qualité de vie.

Toutefois, comme nous l'ont fait remarquer les chefs autochtones de notre pays, les conditions de vie de nos communautés autochtones se placeraient 63e si elles étaient comptabilisées à l'écart du reste du Canada.

73e rang des nations du monde pour la qualité de vie, c'est pour moi tout à fait inacceptable.

Il est impératif pour nous tous de combler cet écart socio-économique qui sépare les Autochtones du Canada des autres Canadiens, et de le faire rapidement.

It has been mentioned today we share history. We also share a future, and while we cannot change our past, we can and we must change our future.

The leaders around this table may not be responsible for the causes of the current situation, however, we are responsible if we don't change it. It is up to us to make it better.

The future of First Nations, of Métis and Inuit People of Canada cannot simply be an extension of the present but must be a destination of greater opportunities, of better quality of life for all.

Through a renewed spirit of

cooperation we have collectively identified five areas of investment: education, health care, housing, economic development and new relations.

Today we have heard specific goals and targets; ambitious goals, ambitious targets. It is our collective duty and our collective responsibility and our collective obligation to adopt an action plan that will enable us to reach these goals.

We must proceed with investments that will provide immediate relief while building the foundation for long-term transformational change.

Cette rencontre d'aujourd'hui nous offre et nous présente une lueur d'espoir. Elle nous offre et nous présente la possibilité de renforcer les relations mutuelles dans le respect et la compréhension.

Prior to this meeting, I met last week with New Brunswick's Aboriginal leaders to listen to them, to receive their advice, to understand their concerns.

I am committed to working with the Aboriginal leaders of New Brunswick and I am more than willing to work with every leader around this table, federal, provincial, Métis, First Nation, Women leaders, Inuit leaders and the Aboriginal Congress to tackle the challenges that we face.

It is my desire that during this meeting we endorse a principled approach for working

together as partners in recognition of mutual respect, mutual responsibility and inclusiveness.

I look forward to a successful and productive meeting. Furthermore, I look forward to meeting again within the next two years to gauge our progress and to be accountable to all Canadians.

The time to do the right thing is now, I agree. Let us seize this opportunity and move forward together.

Let us ensure that all citizens can not only feel the pride of being Canadian but that all people in this country can benefit from greater opportunities, from greater prosperity and a higher standard of living that comes from being Canadian. That is the objective that we must pursue.

Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup.  
--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you very much, Premier.

Far be it for me to suspect that any Premier would blame the Prime Minister when things go awry, but let me just say, I hope you will tell your wife that it was Andy Scott who picked the date.

--- Laughter / Rires

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Premier Doer.  
Happy Birthday, Deanne.

HON. GARY DOER (Manitoba): Thank you,

Prime Minister.

Elders, colleagues at the table, friends, Tansi(ph), and thank you for the opportunity to present today.

Our delegation from Manitoba includes a team of people that has been working on an action plan in Manitoba.

Minister Eric Robinson, who is the Culture and Heritage Minister in Manitoba is with me today; the Honourable Oscar Lathlin, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Affairs; Greg Dewar is our whip which is, of course, a very important role in the elected Legislature and a former member of the Métis Executive.

We have Grand Chief Ron Evans who is the Assembly of First Nations in Manitoba, and we have Tanis Wheeler from the Sagkeeng First Nation who is working with Eric Robinson, who, I think, would make a great caucus member in the future as well, but I digress when I make my comments.

We have in the House right now, sitting in the chair, the Speaker is George Hickes, an Inuit person, who is the uncle of Jordin Tootoo, so that you would know.

So it is our way of demonstrating we have people that we are trying to include in elected offices at the highest level in the Manitoba Legislature

to respect the fact that 6,000 years ago Aboriginal people established Manitoba, and over 130 years ago Louis Riel presented the Settlement Act, basically with the genesis of our province. So we have a lot of work to do but we are beginning that task.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for this meeting and I also want to congratulate you for your settlement on residential schools with the Grand Chief. I think this is a wonderful, wonderful achievement.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. GARY DOER (Manitoba): We have people in our delegation that went to residential schools and it was worrisome, I think, for all Canadians to watch year after year after year the grinding disagreement, where the only benefactor of this dispute was lawyers and not the people and the descendants for residential schools.

Beverly Jacobs just talked a moment ago about Helen Betty Osborne. She was a person that was sent from Norway House to the residential school in The Pas, and we did have, after years, an inquiry to bring some people to justice.

So the recommendations and the follow-up from the federal government, I think, are very important in this regard.

Our team has had the privilege of working with Gordon Campbell. We met with him directly

and I want to congratulate Premier Campbell for his leadership representing Premiers with all the five organizations and leaders and with the federal government.

It is really -- everybody has said it in different ways. Everybody has talked about the gap, everybody has talked about the challenge, the historic opportunity we have had.

Our team that is with me today, and I think the thousands of Aboriginal people in Manitoba and across Canada, do not want communiqués of platitudes. They want a very definite plan of action and they don't want us to come out with 19 silos in terms of what we will do in our own little silos. They want us to come out with a plan that makes a difference for people and Aboriginal people, and that is why I support the holistic approach that has been proposed.

I do believe you can have innovation, you can change the status quo and you can respect treaties in the Constitution.

Let me give you an example. In Manitoba, we discovered that low-income mothers were giving birth to too many underweight babies. It didn't matter whether it was on a First Nation community or a Métis community or an urban Aboriginal person or a non-Aboriginal person, low-income mothers had more underweight babies. I think Beverly Jacobs made the

statement that unhealthy mothers have unhealthy children.

So we designed a program for babies, a healthy baby program to have greater nutrition support for all mothers because a baby is a baby is a baby.

We believe that you can respect the delivery system under the treaties in a First Nation community and respect the jurisdictions of all the other constitutional organizations and still deliver a program to the people, to the babies, to the mothers.

When I visit Red Sucker Lake, I know that the public health nurse works for the existing structure, the Chief and Council in the public health unit, but when Eric Robinson and I visited Red Sucker Lake just recently, the nurse said to us: Since this program has been introduced, there hasn't been one underweight baby born in Red Sucker Lake.

That is an example, I believe, we have to take, a practical idea with a little bit of investment that start with people and respect constitutional responsibilities.

When I travel around the Province of Manitoba -- and I have been to almost all the communities, First Nation, Métis and others in Manitoba -- I am struck by the dignity of people in some of our remote communities.

You talked about the welcome you received, Prime Minister, from people in those



communities. I am struck by their dignity, their respect for the Creator, their respect for Mother Earth, their respect for Elders, that we could all learn from.

I am struck by the dignity that I am always received with but I am also struck by the indignity of the conditions that the people live in in many First Nation and Aboriginal communities. I believe it exists everywhere in Canada and I think we have to have fire in our belly when we come out of this meeting to deal with these issues.

When I go to Garden Hill -- and that is just one community in Northern Manitoba -- where 3,500 people live and not one home has indoor toilets. I will see a grandmother, an Elder, in January having to use an outhouse or a slop bucket, or pail rather, and chip the ice off to take what we take for granted in Canada.

I believe that we have to look at this example of indignity and really invest with passion and action, the same way you did this week with the residential schools, the same way we have to work to make a difference.

We would not accept this if this was our mother or our grandmother. We would not accept it as individuals and we can't accept it as Canadians.

I could show you a paper trail -- and I know your style of delivering and keeping your promises, Prime Minister -- it would make your blood

boil, because it is not you, it us not action, it is not a can-do attitude that we see at this meeting and present here in this room.

So I think we have to really leave here with not only the plan but the passion, the absolute commitment to make a difference to people in our communities.

So let me just go through some of your ideas and make some pledges where I think appropriate from our provincial government and make some recommendations in some of the areas where I might not agree with you totally. There might be a few. This is a debate after all, it is not a session of platitudes.

I do believe in five years we have to have sewer and water in every community and I pledge every northern and remote community in Manitoba that is outside of your fiduciary responsibility, we will do the same thing, and let's do it together.

I also pledge that the standards that you are talking about for water quality and for drinking water in our communities -- which, by the way, are crucial for dialysis units, we had to wait in Garden Hill for dialysis because of water -- we should train those people.

We have trained 120 people in water certification and standards. There is no need for two levels of government to do the same thing. So we pledge

to you we will do that.

In housing, I think we have to build 100,000 units and retrofit units to be R-2000 and have standards that are appropriate. We will agree to train more Aboriginal people to build those houses that need to be built in our communities. We will work with our training programs. We will be part of this vision for housing for Aboriginal people.

In education and training, Prime Minister, and colleagues, there is a real gap, there is a common sense gap. We have a skill shortage that is being identified every hour in Canada, a massive skill shortage and demographics tell us that, and we have a massive under-representation of Aboriginal people in our community colleges, our schools and the completion rate in our high schools.

We are actually getting better results in post-secondary school. We have had a 41 per cent increase in five years in enrolment in post-secondary schools but the high school completion rate is a huge, huge challenge for us.

So I accept your challenge and goals and objectives on post-secondary education. We need more agility and standards in post-secondary schools. We need more head-start programs, which are excellent for pre-school kids in our communities.

We need to have more appropriate work

on standards, curriculum, in-service, and I pledge all our resources in our Department of Education to you and to First Nations and to Aboriginal people to help get this task done in terms of the high school completion rates in Canada. It is not acceptable that we have this low completion rate.

We also have to look at co-op education for the skill, development and training. We in our high schools have kids in tech block going to bowling half days. We need more co-op education in First Nations and Aboriginal communities.

We need more common sense programs that we think we can make a difference on, but we don't want to -- we have trained over 1,000 Aboriginal teachers. Ed Schreyer started a program 30 years ago. We have trained 1,000 Aboriginal teachers in Manitoba but we don't want them isolated outside of the curriculum developments, the innovations, the in-service and other developments that our Departments of Education can provide as a support for education in Manitoba.

We need to declare a national emergency on diabetes. I mentioned this last year -- I recommended this last year.

Since our last meeting, if you look at the incidence of diabetes, which is four times greater in Aboriginal communities than the so-called rest of us, if you look at those incidents, it is tragic. There is

between four and six people a day that are diagnosed with diabetes in Manitoba. That would be close to 2,000 people that have diabetes since our last meeting.

We know some of the causes. We know we can take action on diet, on recreation, on smoking. We know we can take action. We need people in the communities and our school curriculum has to be adjusted to have a national emergency on diabetes in our First Nations communities.

I believe we should, as a target, have a comparable incidence of diabetes, not anything less in 10 years. It is doable. It is doable with action.

In terms of the economy -- and it ties back to education -- we need to continue to build bridges, and we pledge to you that we will continue to build bridges.

We are setting aside more Crown land, and maybe we should do more of that, for treaty land entitlement. We set aside 100,000 acres of land and there is too many acres of land sitting in the provincial government and sitting in the federal government not being designated for economic treaty land entitlement.

You saw the most recent report of the Auditor General. We need to have resource rights in there. We have declared mining and mineral rights for Aboriginal people which was recommended out of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

We need more education and training connections and we need more examples of good, positive business practices in terms of economic development.

We have a new Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, the first one in Canada, with 70 businesses in it but there are still obstacles for those businesses.

There is a company in Oxford House that can't compete for procurement contracts because they are not hooked up to the internet. They are not hooked up to the internet.

So I think your proposal to have "X" number of Internet connections in five years is great but I already think we are five years behind. I think we should do it in a year. I really do believe it. It will make an economic benefit for all Aboriginal and remote communities. It is a tremendous economic tool.

It will help our educational programs in Norway House. Grand Chief Evans is here from Norway House. The kids, I think, are doing a lot better because they are finally hooked up to the net.

I am betting money that in two years the completion rate will be much greater with the internet, and it helps us with tele-health. To me, it is a no-brainer, if you will, to not proceed in one year. We have already lost five years. We can't wait another five years.

So we pledge to you to work with our

utilities and our operations in Manitoba to make sure that that can happen.

Prime Minister, we are committed to accountability in the two years that has been recommended by other Premiers, we are committed to being a partner with the pledges I have made in this presentation, and I do believe we have the historic opportunity but it has got to be a plan of action for people that is doable, achievable and accountable. Otherwise, we will be greeted, as Gordon Campbell said, with cynicism. We have to be greeted with optimism and I believe we can do it.

Thank you very, very much. I appreciate it.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Let me just say, Premier Doer, that that is certainly the kind of attitude that we want to have coming into this meeting and coming out of that meeting. So I don't think you are going to -- we are there.

HON. GARY DOER (Manitoba): Thank you.

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Premier Binns.

HON. PATRICK BINNS (P.E.I.): Thank you very much, Prime Minister.

I want to thank you for the opportunity of representing P.E.I. as we resolve to improve the well-being of Aboriginal men, women and children.

And, Mr. Speaker -- sorry, I have been in the Legislature too long --

--- Laughter / Rires

HON. PATRICK BINNS (P.E.I.): Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to thank the person who left these miniature mukluks in front of my seat, and perhaps they can remind us all of the walk we must take together in future days and months.

To start, Prime Minister, I would like to recognize Chief Darlene Bernard who is here as part of our P.E.I. delegation, also Chair of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of P.E.I. and her staff, Tracey Cutcliffe and Jeff Brant.

Also as part of the national organizations, we have Marilyn Sark who is the President of the Aboriginal Women's Association of P.E.I., and Jamie Gallant, President and Chief of the Native Council of Prince Edward Island, all here on behalf of Prince Edward Island Aboriginal people.

Mr. Prime Minister, part of my duty as Premier, I believe, is to remind Canadians of the visionary undertaking which the Fathers of Confederation had back in Charlottetown in 1864, and I think we have a duty to continue the work which the Fathers started and, of course, that work is the work of nation-building through better education, better health care, housing, economic opportunities and relationships with First



Nations and Aboriginal leaders.

When all is said is done, this will be the modern test of our nationhood and its federalist underpinnings.

Perhaps the most serious failure of the Fathers was that they did not bring the Aboriginal peoples into an acceptable partnership under the Constitution, and that, I believe, is a challenge that falls to all of us.

The Constitution Act of 1867 devotes a total of seven words to the Aboriginal peoples, which, unfortunately, to this day, have not brought them fulfilment as peoples, while depriving all other Canadians of their richness and values, which would have been their reward for recognition and acceptance.

In our case, I can only imagine what our province would be like today if the Mi'kmaq, the People of the Dawn, had been full partners throughout the generations.

The Fathers of Confederation were people of their time and it would be presumptuous to assume that we in their place would have really acted any differently, but in spite of this, there is an outstanding debt and our ancestors' settlement would not have been possible had not the Aboriginal people shared their resources, their food, their medicine, their shelter, their technology of transportation, their

survival skills and commerce. These should have been the elements on which to build a partnership for the benefit of us all.

I would like to just take a moment to share a beautiful inspirational passage from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and I quote:

"Canada is a test case for a grand notion, the notion that dissimilar peoples can share lands, resources, power and dreams while respecting and sustaining their differences. The story of Canada is a story of many such peoples trying and failing and trying again to live together in peace and harmony, but there cannot be peace and harmony unless there is justice."

My purpose, Prime Minister, is served in a very minimal sense today by drawing attention to the belief that the work of building Canada remains incomplete until fairness and justice for Aboriginal peoples are attempted and realized.

And, Prime Minister, I applaud the dedication of the hundreds of individuals who have seized upon the opportunities created by the roundtable in April

of 2004. That dedication will be needed in the years ahead as we work together.

I would like to remind you and all of the federal leaders, your Ministers, of your constitutional and fiduciary obligations, and I also want to close by pledging to all assembled that my province will work hard to meet the objectives that we have identified.

We have a lot of walking to do together and I hope we do it well.

Thank you, Prime Minister.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you, Premier Binns.

Premier Calvert, Saskatchewan.

HON. LORNE CALVERT (Sask): Thank you very much, Prime Minister.

Elders, colleagues and leadership friends, I want to, first of all, add my voice to those who have thanked the Elders for the prayers by which we opened this conference and this afternoon's deliberations for inviting the Creator to be among us, and I want to thank the Elders.

I want to extend, I and our province's delegation and the people of Saskatchewan's thanks to the leadership, the Aboriginal leadership that have worked hard for many, many weeks, months and weeks to bring us

here to this day.

We have heard in the course of the afternoon a number of those have observed that it will take some courage, some boldness to take our nation and our peoples to where we want to be.

I will admit, Prime Minister, I am not quite as bold as the Premier of New Brunswick, I will not announce my wife's age on national television.

--- Laughter / Rires

HON. LORNE CALVERT (Sask): There is boldness and there is bold.

But I want to, colleagues, welcome to this historic gathering a large number of the Aboriginal leadership from Saskatchewan, too many to name, Chiefs, Vice-Chiefs of the Federation, Chief of the Federation, Chiefs of Tribal Councils, Band Chiefs, Métis leadership from across the province, but I would want to take an opportunity to introduce one.

Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, recently elected as Chief of the La Ronge Band, one of a growing number of women in Saskatchewan who are taking leadership. Chief Cook-Searson brings another first in terms of Aboriginal leadership in our province. I think I am within the mark to say that she is the first Chief while in office to have a baby.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. LORNE CALVERT (Sask): And we are

exceptionally pleased that the youngest member of the Saskatchewan delegation, Vincent, is here with us and looking forward to the future he counts upon us working together to create.

This is, in our view, a historic meeting. This does, in our view, represent a turning point, a turning point that we hope brings about a new collaboration.

The future of Saskatchewan, as the future of Canada, is much linked today to a large and a growing Aboriginal population.

We in Saskatchewan see the relationship first and foremost being founded on a historic treaty relationship, a constitutional relationship. In our view, the treaties are vital, living and sacred undertakings that are the foundation of the definition of our relationship.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. LORNE CALVERT (Sask): When Crown representatives and First Nations Chiefs sat down over a century ago to negotiate and sign the treaties, they established a relationship based on respect, mutual assistance and hope in a time of upheaval and change. We believe we must act in that very same spirit today.

First Nations and Métis leaders in Saskatchewan work hard, work hard to establish and to strengthen partnerships with educators, with business,

with governments, and we believe that together we are making some progress.

Just in the last several weeks, in Saskatchewan we proclaimed 2005 as the Year of First Nations and Métis Women, a proclamation by the way which responded to the leadership of First Nations women in Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Just in the past couple of weeks, again working with Aboriginal women in our province, we have announced a task force to respond to the issue of missing persons, primarily Aboriginal, primarily women. We are investing \$2 million in this work, a work that arises, of course, from the stolen sisters.

In just the past couple of weeks, we have announced the First Nations and Métis economic development program to increase opportunities for Aboriginal people and to reduce unemployment.

Just yesterday, we announced a multi-million dollar northern road strategy to link First Nations and Métis communities of our north to economic opportunity.

As Premier, over the last two years, I have been welcomed onto the territories of 45 of our First Nations. It is my hope to be welcomed onto the territories of all of our First Nations, more than 70 in number.

I have seen firsthand in my own province the conditions in which some of our citizens live and I know some of those conditions exist on reserves in other corners of the country.

My wife and I make our home in the inner city of Saskatoon. There are Aboriginal people who are my neighbours living in difficult conditions, but I just want to say, while I have seen some of the difficulty, I have also seen much of the success.

I can take you to a First Nation in Saskatchewan which has developed a world-class water treatment facility.

I can take you to First Nations in inner city neighbourhoods where what is happening in school sends one away with a great deal of optimism.

I can take you to where there is economic development happening on urban reserve. I can take you to reserve economic development.

There is much success which ought to encourage us for the task that we have.

As Canadians, surely we can no longer settle for two Canadas: one for the affluent and one for the impoverished, one the envy of the world and one more closely resembling the Third World, one Canada bringing us hope and one battling despair.

Whether we are federal, national, provincial, Aboriginal leaders, we must do more, we must

do it better and we must do it now and we must do it together.

I want to conclude by saying we have heard a number of Premiers suggest that we should meet -- and other leaders suggest that we should meet again over the course of the next two years. I say the sooner the better, the sooner the better to encourage the progress that we all must undertake.

Saskatchewan looks forward to working collaboratively with Aboriginal leadership in our own province, with Aboriginal leadership outside the province. We look forward to working collaboratively with our federal colleagues and our provincial colleagues.

I just want to leave you with a quote from Chief Poundmaker. About 110 or 120 years ago, Chief Poundmaker in Saskatchewan said this to his people at a time of significant challenge and change. Poundmaker said:

"We all know the story of the man who sat beside the trail too long and the trail grew over and he could never find his way again. We cannot forget what has happened, but we cannot go back, but we cannot just sit by the trail."



Prime Minister, there is a resolve, there is a resolve in this historic meeting that Canadians and the leadership will not sit by the trail.

Thank you very much.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you, Premier.

Premier Williams.

HON. DANNY WILLIAMS (Nfld): Thank you, Prime Minister.

Prime Minister, Elders, Premiers, Aboriginal leaders, Chiefs, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to thank you as well, Prime Minister, for what should be a historic meeting, an historic summit, and I guess time will tell our collective success as to whether we have achieved the results.

I also want to thank Premier Campbell for his usual good hospitality in beautiful Kelowna, as well for all your hard work, for going across the country and being a facilitator for something that is going to be a very, very successful product, and as well anybody who assisted you, any of the officials in the room for all parties here. We haven't gotten to this table just to get before the cameras without a lot of the hard work we do. So I thank you and all the officials for that as well.

As well, Prime Minister, we have a relatively significant delegation from Newfoundland and Labrador and if I could just introduce them.

From the Miawpukek Conne River First Nation is Chief M'ishel Joe, who is in the room -- Chief Joe; Chief Anastasia Qupee; Ben M'ishel, the President of the Innu Nation -- and, of course, Chief Qupee is from the Sheshatshiu First Nation -- Deputy Chief Maryanne Lewi from the Mushuau First Nation.

As well, the people that have already been introduced. There is William Anderson III from the Labrador Inuit Association, Chris Montague from the Labrador Métis Nation, and as well Randy Drover from the Federation of Newfoundland Indians.

I am deeply honoured, ladies and gentlemen, to sit around this table and in this room with such an esteemed group of individuals, a group of individuals who I sincerely believe have a heart and a genuine concern for the issues facing Aboriginal people in this country and a sincere desire to effect meaningful change.

We collectively have a real opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada today, and indeed, in the lives of those future generations to come but this will not happen unless there is an unequivocal commitment from all the parties to find comprehensive solutions to these

very, very complex problems.

Money and quick fix solutions are not the answer. Random hits of drive-by funding will not resolve these deep-rooted issues.

It is incumbent upon all non-Aboriginal Canadians and their leaders to fully understand the basis of the problems in order to appreciate the difficulty and to find and embrace solutions.

My own personal encounters with those affected in Newfoundland and Labrador have had a deep and a lasting impact on my perspective.

I met just a couple of weeks ago with the Aboriginal leaders in my province. It was a productive and a frank meeting about the many issues facing Aboriginal people in Newfoundland and Labrador, many issues which are common right across this country and have already been mentioned.

In addition to that meeting, I also met with another group of stakeholders who had an even more profound impact, and these were the representatives of Aboriginal women organizations.

I sat that day and I listened with a very heavy heart to those women describe some of the enormous and the overwhelming challenges that they face every day of their lives, challenges that their fellow Canadians can only read about or watch on television.

But regardless of how far removed we are as individuals from this, these are challenges that can no longer be ignored.

I heard one lady describe to me her decade-long fight to have police in her community, a fight that ensued after her daughter was murdered and the perpetrator remained a free man.

Another lady told of how she worked hard to beat her own serious addictions in an effort to provide an example to her children, only to see them take up their own addictive habits of severe substance abuse.

I heard the unbelievable statistic in one community that not one child has graduated from high school in 10 years.

I heard the story of a woman who could not afford legal representation and who could not speak English, and consequently, signed over the custody of her three children inadvertently.

These are stories that are simply not acceptable to me and they should not be acceptable to any Canadian.

Each suicide by an Aboriginal youth should be an indelible scar on the soul of each and every one of us for not having taken the steps to save the lives of those very precious and those very vulnerable children.

Aboriginal suicide should be

considered a national emergency and a top priority for all of us.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. DANNY WILLIAMS (Sask): I can tell you that those women who spoke to me that day provided the motivation for tackling the difficult problems that face the Aboriginal people in this country.

The yearning and the passion and the raw emotion in their voices when they spoke of their children and their communities was both moving and tragic.

The streams of tears that flowed down their faces that afternoon, to me, it was like a river of emotion with the tide, with the current pulling them towards a bank of despair on the one hand, but their spirit and their courage and their will fighting that current and bringing them to the bank of hope on the other side.

Those women knew that to lose hope is to give up and that is something that I believe is not acceptable to them, although their own leaders in fact acknowledge their people abuse alcohol because there is hopelessness.

We are here today to clearly identify the challenges but to offer solutions and to give them hope.

I firmly believe that while these are

important objectives, it is meaningless unless we also identify realistic mechanisms for accountability, which, indeed, we all acknowledge.

We must be able to measure our successes and our shortcomings if we are to have any hope of effecting meaningful change.

While it is natural to focus more so on the negative in this particular format where we are charged with addressing the issues facing the Aboriginal people in our country, I believe it is equally important to identify the successes and the potential and the opportunities.

The Miawpukek First Nation at Conne River in Newfoundland and Labrador is a shining example of a success story, achieving nearly 100 per cent employment in a province that leads the country in unemployment and taking control of its own destiny in health and education and housing and economic opportunity.

And, of course, we are extremely proud of the Inuit People of Labrador in achieving self-government (native language spoken).

So collectively around this table, our challenge is to deal with the issues head on while at the same time identifying and maximizing opportunities, and also sharing successes so that we can learn from each other on a go-forward basis.

But, first of all, we must listen and learn from the Aboriginal people who deal with these problems every single day of their lives.

The task is not an easy one and the answers are not simple but the strength of our resolve must surpass the difficulty of the challenge.

Money alone will not resolve these issues but compassion and understanding and total commitment will take us a long way to achieving the recognition and the respect and the dignity and the justice that Aboriginal people deserve.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians add the fire in our minds and in our hearts and in our souls to Premier Campbell's flame of hope, which has been lit by yourself, Prime Minister, and your Minister and your officials today, our First Ministers and our Aboriginal leaders. We can never let that flame go out.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you, Premier.

Premier Handley, Northwest Territories.

HON. JOSEPH HANDLEY (NWT): Thank you, Prime Minister.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Chief Lewi and the people of the Westbank First Nation

for hosting us as visitors to their traditional territory.

Prime Minister, Premiers, leaders, Elders, ladies and gentlemen, this gathering is historic and I am pleased to be here to represent the people of the Northwest Territories.

I am also very pleased that many northern First Nations and Métis and Inuit leaders are here with me today to witness this historic occasion.

I can't name them all but in particular I would like to acknowledge Dene National Chief Noeline Villebrun and Northwest Territories Métis President Rob Tardif.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. JOSEPH HANDLEY (NWT): For the people of the Northwest Territories, particularly our Aboriginal citizens, the work we do and the progress we make here together is extremely important for the future of our territory.

Indeed, as we have heard from colleagues around this table today, to succeed with solid commitments from all parties to bridge the gap in the quality of life and the opportunities for Aboriginal people is fundamental to a brighter future for Canada and all Canadians.

From our perspective in the Northwest Territories, it is important to remember that Aboriginal



Canadians are not a homogeneous group. It is important that the work we do over the next two days respects and acknowledges these differences and that we work within that reality.

In the Northwest Territories, 50 per cent of our population is Aboriginal. Within that population we have large First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations, six different languages are spoken and history and the aspirations of each of our Aboriginal Peoples are different and distinct.

While many participate in the wage economy, a great number continue to follow a traditional lifestyle.

Let me tell you that despite the differences among First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples, we work hard together to find areas of common interest. This is our reality and it is our future.

Although we may not always agree, our government works with Aboriginal governments in full partnership.

I also want to share what is also fundamental to our approach to a more prosperous future.

In the Northwest Territories, we believe it is essential that we take advantage of economic opportunities from the large resource development projects such as our diamond mines and the Mackenzie gas pipeline to help achieve our goals of good

health, good health care, affordable housing and education and skills training for northern Aboriginal citizens.

We believe that it is through comprehensive action plans that take into account regional realities that we will succeed in closing the gap we are discussing today.

It is not enough to simply provide education and skills training, it must be an opportunity to, at the end of the process, turn -- I'm sorry, there must be an opportunity at the end of the process to turn that education and training into meaningful work and improved standards of living and quality of life.

Let me illustrate. We received good news yesterday regarding progress on the next phase of the development of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. Without doubt, this will be the largest development project in the country and we must work together to seize the opportunities that that pipeline provides.

Prime Minister, if we do it right, the next 10 years could mean tremendous positive changes in the lives of Aboriginal People in the north.

Given the wealth that is generated in the Northwest Territories, there is no reason why there has to be a gap in the quality of life. Working together we can overcome this and I know we will.

It is going to mean that we must have

the ability to invest in our people and the infrastructure and northern Aboriginal citizens must benefit and share in the decision-making.

It is, therefore, essential that northerners have more control over our natural resources and receive a fair share of the revenues generated.

It is critical we have the ability to plan properly for our future and be able to create a long-term fund -- a rainy day fund, if you like -- to provide new opportunities for our citizens when the resources are no longer there.

In the immediate future the development of our resources and revenue sharing can mean self-reliance, the ability to pursue our traditional economies, take on modern initiatives, like ownership of the pipeline by the Aboriginal pipeline group, and even the connection of the Northwest Territories to the rest of Canada with a highway to the Arctic Ocean.

These are the kind of opportunities that will provide for a better standard of living for northern Aboriginal citizens, far exceeding anything that can be achieved by government grants and contributions alone.

While it is true that here today we need to agree on national goals and targets, it is in our regions and communities where the goals need to be translated into action.

We know that we need to do business differently; in short, we must focus on people, not on process.

We need to find new ways to demonstrate that we are stronger as a family than as a collection of strangers and that this is the greatest country in which to live for all of us, not just most of us, but for all of us.

As leaders, we need to trust one another's commitment to come together on a regular basis to share progress and success stories and to determine where we need to change course, improve efforts and, most of all, to continue what we set in motion today.

I wish to acknowledge you, Prime Minister, for the leadership you have shown in keeping Aboriginal issues as a priority for your government and for hosting this meeting.

I wish to thank the leaders of the National Aboriginal organizations for their tremendous contribution and the patience they have shown throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the Premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell, for his work on these important issues on behalf of all the Premiers.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the tremendous work on the part of the officials of 19 delegations who have worked so hard over the past year

preparing for this meeting.

In closing, I would like to say that in this room we have all of the leaders, we have all of the capacity to remove that gap that exists in the quality of life between Aboriginal People and other Canadians.

It is up to all of us around the table to get the job done.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you, Premier.

Let's go to Premier Fentie of the Yukon.

HON. DENNIS FENTIE: Thank you, Prime Minister.

Prime Minister, fellow Premiers, respected Elders, Aboriginal leaders, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon and warm and sincere greetings from the Yukon.

It is a great honour to be here and participating today in what is a very historic event. And, Prime Minister, you are to be commended for ensuring that this First Ministers' Meeting is a reality.

I also on behalf of Yukon want to extend our appreciation and acknowledgement to Premier Campbell who has worked tirelessly in putting this

together on behalf of the provinces and the territories.

I want to begin by introducing the Yukon delegation. In attendance with the Yukon here today is Grand Chief Andy Carvill. The Grand Chief represents the Council of Yukon First Nations which is made up of 11 of the Yukon's 14 First Nations and also four Gwich'in First Nations from the Mackenzie River Delta Region.

Also in attendance is Vice-Chief Rick O'Brien, Yukon's representative with the Assembly of First Nations, Chief James Allen of the Champagne/Aishihik First Nation, Chief Darren Taylor of the Tr'on Dek Hwech'in First Nation, Tribal Chief Hammond Dick of the Kaska Nation and the Kashadehene(ph) of the Carcross First Nation, Mr. Mark Wedge.

And I would like to first draw a parallel here, Prime Minister. Kashadehene(ph) translated means head man standing, and the parallel is, as leaders of this country the time has come for us all to stand up and deal with the situation and the conditions that Aboriginal Canadians find themselves in today and live with every day, for in a country as wealthy, in a country with such potential and opportunity, the gaps in education, the lack of economic opportunities, the state of health and the living conditions for First Nations People is completely unacceptable.

Prime Minister, from the Yukon perspective we believe that one of the fundamental ingredients for success is self determination and, in that regard, the Yukon has a great deal to offer.

Given the status of our land claims and self-government agreements, the Yukon can contribute to that particular area of the equation.

Eleven of the Yukon's 14 First Nations have final agreements and self-government agreements. These agreements provide those First Nations with constitutionally protected rights and benefits to land and resources, as well as the right to govern their citizens and their settlement land in accordance with the negotiated self-government agreements.

But it also provides certainty for the entire community with respect to land management and resource development and charts a future for social, political and economic development of our territory, and it creates a foundation of governance in the Yukon which contributes greatly to dealing with the many areas and challenges that we face here today, yet it allows us to work in partnership to a form of collaborative governance that we are making progress on education, on economic opportunities, on housing and on health care.

It also creates a unique situation for the territory, and I think it is important that we all recognize that there are differences and unique

situations for all the provinces and territories in this regard, and we must ensure that the work that we do here is reflective of and responsive to all of those unique situations.

We must do so to ensure that nobody falls through the cracks, to ensure that we are providing solutions for all Aboriginal Canadians, all Inuit, all Métis and all First Nations.

Mr. Prime Minister, I think it is important also to reflect on the area that is important to Yukon and specific to the Yukon, and Yukon and Yukon First Nations are here to ensure that the proper implementation of the negotiated final agreements and self-government agreements is taking place, to remind Canada that there is unfinished business in the Yukon with the Ross River Dene First Nation, with the Liard First Nation and with the White River First Nation.

We are here to ensure that Canada recognizes the negative impact of its on-reserve/off-reserve policies and its status/non-status policy, for in the Yukon we are a jurisdiction where our final agreements and self-government agreements do not distinguish on that basis whatsoever.

We are here to ensure clarity of responsibility and we are here to ensure that all participants understand that the situation of the northern territories is very different, legally and



culturally, and we must also ensure that any product and agreement that we achieve must be reflective of and responsive to the situation in the north.

We must proceed with a process that is inclusive and all encompassing, for what we do here will certainly have a lasting effect on the future of Canada.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you,  
Premier.

Premier Okalik of Nunavut.

HON. PAUL OKALIK: (Native language  
spoken)

First of all, I would like to thank you, Prime Minister, for providing us with an opportunity to take part in this conference.

Also, I must acknowledge the hard work of Gordon Campbell. You have come a long way.

--- Laughter / Rires

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. PAUL OKALIK: When I saw you get elected, I said, oh, I wonder how he'll be on our Aboriginal issues, but you've come around and I appreciate that.

HON. GORDON CAMPBELL: I always speak highly of you as well, Paul.

--- Laughter / Rires

HON. PAUL OKALIK: It has been a long trail to get here but, finally, we have an opportunity to map out a common approach to some of our most serious problems.

As an Aboriginal person who has spent 20 years working with the Inuit of Nunavut in our struggle to be treated as equal to other Canadians, I can say we are committed to making this country work.

It's in this spirit of building a country that I speak to you today.

When we ratified the Nunavut land claim agreement in 1993 we did so in the full expectation that we would be treated as equals in Confederation. We negotiated with Canada the creation of a public government that we be given the tools to build an economy and a society. We wanted no more than the same rights, responsibilities and privileges that come with being an Aboriginal and being a Canadian.

Unfortunately, today, this is not the case. I want to specifically draw attention to how Inuit are continuously denied access to services and programs meant for Aboriginal People, their Aboriginal fishing, housing and day care programs, to mention just three examples, and they are all closed to Inuit today.

Why is it that the Canadian Constitution recognizes me as an Aboriginal but government policy does not?

If it's a divide-and-conquer strategy, it reflects poorly on our country. When Canada begins to practise in its policies what it preaches in its Constitution, that is when the day will begin and we will become equals in this country.

Putting words into practice means you have to start facing up to what are often called negative social indicators.

Those are nice fancy words that hide some really ugly truths. In plain language, it's called homelessness, illiteracy, violence, poverty. You could also add suicide, addictions and despair.

Every Aboriginal person in this room can tell you these are very personal words. They are words that hurt because they have all experienced them.

As an Aboriginal person, I can tell you that we want change. As a Premier, I can tell you that we have the ability to make that change. As a Canadian, I'm here to say that we must change.

It is my hope that through these meetings we will start to improve the lives of all Aboriginal Canadians.

Just imagine, Prime Minister, if we have another conference in two years and our conditions have greatly improved, you will get more than a very nice jacket.

--- Laughter / Rires

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. PAUL OKALIK: Merci beaucoup.

Qujannamuk.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: I will take you up on that, both in terms of getting something and also being here in two years.

--- Laughter / Rires

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : C'est évident qu'il y a une unanimité d'opinion autour de la table. Ce que maintenant sera la preuve de ce que nous voulons faire, ça va être le plan que nous allons établir, avec les objectifs.

Anyone who is listening to this discussion would be heartened by the unanimity, not the consensus, the unanimity of opinion around the table and the strength of the emotion and the conviction.

That being said, I think we all understand that the devil is in the details and that the degree of resolve that we have talked about here will be known when we come together on a concrete plan with measurable objectives that will not brook failure.

That is the next stage in our discussions.

We have been here -- we are quite late. We are going to take a 15-minute break.

I would ask you, really, be back here

within 15 minutes and then we will go into the next level of discussion.

And I want to thank you for everything said so far.

--- Upon recessing at 3:15 p.m. /

Suspension à 15 h 15

MEETING OF FIRST MINISTERS AND  
NATIONAL ABORIGINAL LEADERS

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RÉUNION DES PREMIERS MINISTRES ET DES  
DIRIGEANTS AUTOCHTONES NATIONAUX

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VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

(Unrevised)  
Press Conference  
November 25, 2005

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COMPTE RENDU TEXTUEL

(non révisé)  
Conférence de presse  
Le 25 novembre 2005

Kelowna, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Friday, November 25, 2005  
at 1:37 p.m. / La réunion débute le vendredi  
25 novembre 2005 à 13 h 37

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: If I can call  
the Press Conference to order.

Avant de commencer, deux de nos  
Premiers ministres ont des annonces qui sont très  
importantes à faire.

Before I begin the Press Conference,  
two of the Premiers here have a very important statement  
to make.

Alors, je demanderais, au tout début,  
au Premier ministre Charest de prendre la parole.

M. JEAN CHAREST : Merci, Monsieur le  
Premier ministre Martin, collègues.

I noticed yesterday that the trend in  
these meetings is that we have to start up a new line of  
clothing.

So in keeping with a great Canadian  
tradition, the Grey Cup will be held in British Columbia,  
Vancouver, on Sunday.

As you know, as everyone expected, the  
Montreal Alouettes will be participating.

--- Laughter / Rires

--- Applause / Applaudissements

MR. JEAN CHAREST: I am very sensitive

about these things.

Alors, les Alouettes vont participer.

I cannot be there because I have to be the opening of COP 10 and I think with you in Montreal on Monday but I would like to be represented, so I am going to ask the Premier of British Columbia, who is looking for a team at this game --

--- Laughter / Rires

MR. JEAN CHAREST: And I think Ralph also wanted to file a request, so I will let Ralph say a few words, and then both he and I have a presentation to make to Gordon Campbell.

HON. RALPH KLEIN: That is fine, and I would think that the Premier of British Columbia would want to support the right team, a team from the West, although it is not the B.C. Lions, but certainly he would look good in the colours of Edmonton and the Eskimos.

--- Laughter / Rires

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. RALPH KLEIN: Alouettes, what is that?

MR. JEAN CHAREST: It is the winning team, Ralph.

--- Laughter / Rires

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. GORDON CAMPBELL: Thanks for sharing that.



RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Well, I am going to be at the game, Premier Campbell. I would be very interested in seeing how you handle this little dilemma.

--- Laughter / Rires

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: The first thing I want to do is that I want to thank the Elders, all of the Elders who were here.

I want to thank Chief Robert Lewi and the Westbank First Nation.

I want to thank the leadership of the Assembly of First Nations.

I want to thank the leadership of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the leadership of the Métis National Council, the leadership of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the leadership of the Native Women's Association of Canada.

You have been articulate and you have been visionary, and I believe that those whom you represent owe you an enormous amount and so do the Canadian people.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: I want to thank the provincial and territorial leaders, their Ministers, and I want to thank Ralph Klein who is the head of the Council of the Federation.

I want to thank Gordon Campbell, not

just for being our host but for the very hard work that he has put in over the last number of months.

I want to thank my colleague Andy Scott and the pertinent MPs, Senators and Ministers of the Canadian Government, and I want to thank the delegates and observers.

I have got to say thanks to all of you around this table. It was just mentioned that this is probably one of the best federal/provincial meetings that any of us have attended.

I believe that we have made an unprecedented step forward and toward the objectives that brought us to Kelowna.

Aboriginal Canadians have no desire for more rhetoric. They have needs and those needs demand attention. It is as simple as that.

That is what these two days have been about and that is what all the work going into this gathering over the last year and a half has been about.

We all know that there are serious problems in too many Aboriginal communities and it is heart-breaking to hear the stories of lost promise, as we heard around this table yesterday and today, to see the conditions in which too many people live, to witness the despair that corrodes the potential and the hope of young Aboriginals, both on reserve and off.

Here in Kelowna, we have agreed to a

detailed plan for action, a plan that will include concrete 5- and 10-year targets for better health, for better education, for economic opportunity, for housing and clean water.

Quite simply, targets mean progress and progress means a better way of life for First Nation, Inuit and Métis people.

What we seek to do will cost money. It also requires, however, an effective partnership, innovative solutions, the objectives to measure and ensure results and full accountability, transparency and good governance, and this is the course that we are pursuing.

Les communautés autochtones ont des besoins très concrets, très spécifiques. Leurs histoires vont droit au coeur. C'est pourquoi nous sommes tous venus ici avec la détermination de s'en occuper, de trouver des solutions. C'est ce que nous faisons, et nous le faisons en travaillant ensemble dans un esprit de collaboration.

Pendant ces deux jours, nous avons établi des objectifs pour faire des progrès dans les domaines critiques : l'éducation, la santé, le logement, l'eau potable et le développement économique.

Notre but est de faire une véritable différence, de faire tout notre possible pour transformer la dure réalité de la vie d'un si grand nombre de nos

concitoyens, cela par des investissements qui apportent de réels changements dans le quotidien des Autochtones.

So in conclusion, let me just say that the future, the future of Aboriginal Canadians is an issue that all of us, it is an issue that I care about very deeply.

I know this, the federal government will not solve the challenges facing Aboriginal Canadians by fiat or decree. We have the prime fiduciary responsibility. It is our responsibility and we will live up to that responsibility in full and we will succeed because of the drive of the Aboriginal leaders and of the Aboriginal communities themselves and with the cooperation and the very strong commitment of the provincial and territorial leaders who are here.

Nous avons franchi un pas aujourd'hui, un grand pas, et demain, nous en franchirons un autre, et après demain aussi. Ensemble, nous prendrons la voie qui mènera à une vie meilleure pour les peuples autochtones.

We have taken a big step here today and tomorrow we take another, and the day after that, and together, we will walk along the path to a better life for First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: I would now ask Premier Klein, as Chair of the Council of the Federation,

to take the mike.

HON. RALPH KLEIN: Prime Minister, first of all, thank you. Thank you for convening this very productive and useful meeting.

Thank you to all of my colleagues for being here and to the Aboriginal leaders, to all the Ministers who have attended, Elders, and especially Gordon who worked very, very hard on this file. Thank you, Gordon.

As you said, Prime Minister, it was useful and informative for all of us here to share our perspectives on the many complex and important issues that we discussed over the last two days: education, economic opportunities, health, housing and relationships.

It goes without saying that the Aboriginal leaders provided us with valuable information and we had some frank discussions on how we can move forward to improve our relationships with Aboriginal people and close the gap in living standards for Aboriginal people across this country.

We are all aware from what we heard today and what you heard, Prime Minister, that Aboriginal Canadians do not enjoy the same health, education and living conditions as most Canadians, and we heard also that it is unacceptable for this situation to continue.

I know I speak on behalf of all provinces and territories when I say that we are committed to working hard on initiatives that will lead to significant improvements for Aboriginal people in Canada over the next five or 10 years.

We have heard that targets must be set in many areas, such as improving the high school completion rates of Aboriginal children and increasing the participation rates of Aboriginal people in the labour force to the same level as other Canadians.

With the cooperation of all orders of government and Aboriginal people, we have resolved to meet these targets. At least that is my sense of this meeting.

To make these improvements happen, we need the federal government to live up to its constitutional responsibilities for Aboriginal people and that has been indicated here, that you are, indeed, going to do that, and that is regardless of their status and where they live. That includes all Aboriginal people, on and off reserve, Métis people, Inuit people and, of course, Aboriginal women.

We need the federal government to work with us and with the local Aboriginal groups that live in each of our jurisdictions and we need to take coordinated local approaches to improve Aboriginal peoples' lives. We need to make real progress.

This meeting, Prime Minister, has been an extremely good, first step. As you say, you don't travel 10,000 miles without taking the first step.

So we are now moving forward. Now, all we have to do is build on it.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you, Premier Klein.

I would now ask our host Premier, Premier Campbell of British Columbia, to take the mike.

HON. GORDON CAMPBELL: Thank you, Prime Minister.

First, let me again acknowledge the Westbank First Nation and the Okanagan Nation for welcoming us to their territories.

Let me thank the Chiefs and the Elders who came and shared their stories and worked with us through the last two days.

The contributions of this forum will have an impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadians, Aboriginal Canadians, First Nations, Inuit, Métis people.

It has taken us 138 years as a nation to arrive at this moment. It has taken decades of dialogue and a tortured path of frustration and failure to bring us to this moment of clarity and commitment.

The commitments that each of us have undertaken at this table are profound, far-reaching and fundamental to the Canada that we all aspire to build together.

Like everyone, I sincerely hope this moment will prove to be a pivotal moment in Canada's future. For me, it has been the single most significant, poignant and promising act that we have been able to accomplish together.

With the Prime Minister and the federal government, with each of the provinces and the territories and with the five national Aboriginal organizations, we have set a path for the future which I believe Canadians will embrace.

I would like to thank all of the Premiers who spent a great deal of their time working towards this meeting, reaching out to their Métis, Inuit and First Nations leaders across their provinces and territories so that we could come here today with a fundamental shift in direction and a fundamental change in the relationship that we all share.

Minutes from now, this table will be empty, this room will be cleared, there will be silence.

Our job now and our abiding commitment to one another and to the citizens we serve is to ensure that the memory of this moment finds its voice and its force in history through our actions, through a new



working relationship aimed at ensuring Canada's third solitude is henceforth recognized as a true founding partner in Confederation, through an action plan backstopped by ongoing political commitment, genuine partnerships and new funding to bridge the gaps for Aboriginal children, families and future generations.

Our duty now is to ensure that when this room goes dark the light that has been lit, the light of hope that has been lit over the last two days, lives on and burns brighter month after month, year after year, in our hearts and in Canada's corridors of power.

Mr. Prime Minister, the honour of the Crown depends on our meeting these commitments. The honour of the Crown has been a silent partner in this room here and now, and with our words, its import is at stake.

I want to stress that from British Columbia's perspective the honour of the Crown is the ultimate guarantor that we will leave this room with. We will enter a new era of respect and accommodation and reconciliation.

Jurisdictional overlaps or uncertainties must not be an excuse for inaction. We must not allow them to stand in the way of what we know is right to do. Real progress on each front we have contemplated must be made. Constitutional wrangling must not become a refuge or an apology for inaction.

Each of us at this table today are the leaders who must now take these new tools and get the job done. We are the leaders who must respect and embrace the explicit commitments and assurances that we have made to Aboriginal leaders and citizens across this country.

We are the leaders who will be held to account for making meaningful progress in health, education, housing, economic development for First Nation, Métis and Inuit people across Canada, regardless of where they live.

The world looks at Canada and they aspire to be like Canada. They aspire to the model that Canada has set, a model of harmony, tolerance, understanding, cultural diversity and unlimited potential and promise.

Yesterday and today, we have looked at some of our failings as a country and we have embraced the idea that we can improve, we can be better. We can be better for all Canadians and we will be.

Prime Minister, the power of our endeavour is the true promise of the people of the country. Each of us as leaders endeavour to put Canadian values into action as we leave this room.

I want to say a special thank you to the leaders of the National Aboriginal organizations because, indeed for all of us, we should recognize that the greatest risk at coming to this table was theirs.

It is sometimes easier to stand back and deal with the problems you have and say, let's not try something new, let's not challenge the status quo, let's stay mired in the past.

Each of the Aboriginal leaders who joined us looked to the future. Each of the Aboriginal leaders who joined us and have been part of this discussion, in shaping the discussion, in planning for their future, said they were willing to take the risk on behalf of the people that they serve.

I particularly want to recognize the exceptional leadership that has been shown by National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations.

It was the National Chief who came to us and said: Let us put aside the search for headlines and let us look for solutions. Let us recognize that solutions will come not in a year or two but we will have to commit ourselves for a decade. We will have to commit resources, we will have to commit creativity, we will have to commit to getting results but, most importantly, we will have to relentlessly pursue this plan. We must relentlessly pursue it if we are to be successful.

And I want to thank all of the leaders, the Métis National Council, the ITK, the AFN, Council of Aboriginal people and the Native Women's Association of Canada for sharing with us their goals and their dreams.

And, Prime Minister, I want to recognize and acknowledge the work of Minister Scott. I know that I have travelled across the country a couple of times. He has travelled across the country dozens of times in pursuit of this agenda and laying out this plan.

And finally, let me say thank you to you, Prime Minister, because it is equally a risk for you to say, let's get together with the Premiers again -- not a big risk, but it is a reasonable risk.

--- Laughter / Rires

HON. GORDON CAMPBELL: I think that, Prime Minister, you opened a door for all of us, and as you opened that door, each Premier walked through. As you opened that door, each Aboriginal leader came forward and said, let us guide you to a future that we can all embrace.

So I want to say on behalf of all of us, thank you for establishing this, thank you for creating the opportunity for us to reach for a Canada that we all aspire to.

Someone once said: Whatever you can do or dream, you can do begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.

I am hopeful that what we have done in the last two days will create some magic for First Nation, Inuit and Métis people across this country. We will transform their lives and all Canadians will be

proud of the efforts and the energy we put behind that.

Thank you very much, Prime Minister.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you,  
Premier Campbell.

I would now call on National Chief  
Phil Fontaine, the Assembly of First Nations.

CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE: Thank you, Prime  
Minister.

I first of all want to congratulate  
you, sir, the First Ministers and my fellow Aboriginal  
leaders for making history.

The fact that the Prime Minister and  
the First Ministers sat with the First Peoples of this  
land to engage in a real discussion on our issues and our  
agenda, our inherent Aboriginal and treaty rights, is, in  
itself, historic.

We spent months developing our  
detailed plans for each of our priorities. These have  
been met with concrete federal, provincial and  
territorial commitments and will benefit all First  
Nations across Canada, and ultimately, all Canadians.

I clearly stated in my discussions  
with the Prime Minister and the Premiers in the months  
leading up to this meeting that a minimum of \$5 billion  
in federal investments would be required to initiate our  
10-year comprehensive plan. We have agreed that we will

complete a five-year plan and report back on our progress to all First Nations and Canadians.

I am very pleased that this expectation has been met. This is a very positive step forward to reward the hard work that First Nations across all regions have completed in preparing for this meeting.

I said at the start that we will have our critics, but I believe our plan will be difficult to criticize. We have conquered our own cynicism.

Of course, this is not just about money and spending. This is about investing. This is about creating a solid and stable foundation for future growth and productivity. We will turn poverty into prosperity.

I want to thank in particular my good friend Premier Campbell and the Prime Minister for their efforts in making this meeting happen.

I want to thank all the First Ministers for their willing participation, for their presence and their interventions.

And of course, I would be remiss if I didn't thank my good friend Minister Scott for his hard work and his dedication. Thank you, Minister Scott.

I believe it is understood that Canada must move to conclude its unfinished business with our people. We reached a landmark agreement on residential schools this week. We must now deal with issues like

land claims, treaty-making and treaty implementation.

We have seen how far we can go in just two days. Imagine how far we can go in 10 years! We will close the gap in the quality of life between our people and other Canadians. That will be our legacy to coming generations.

We have a lot of hard work ahead of us but it is a workload that we will share as partners in Confederation, just as we originally agreed to share in the riches and the beauty of this incredible land. This will also reinforce our position even in spite of any federal election.

Thank you.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you.

I would now call on Jose Kusugak, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

MR. JOSE KUSUGAK: Thank you, Prime Minister.

I want to celebrate at this press conference, so I will go further on details at a later date.

(Native language spoken)

I will use the analogy of football because this is coming up in a couple of days.

Sunday is Grey Cup but the Eskimos, the real Eskimos, the Inuit --

--- Laughter / Rires

MR. JOSE KUSUGAK: The Inuit are the real winners today at the First Ministers' Meeting, and you might ask why. I think by three real steps forward or three touchdowns, so to speak, in housing, education and relationships.

We also scored a few goals in health. The health blueprint is still a work-in-progress, but at least there is a federal commitment to implement key initiatives to improve Inuit health.

But, most importantly, we have won, I think all of us, as a team, because all governments have recognized the importance of being Inuit-specific in solutions instead of the old one-size-fits-all.

So, in saying that, I would like to also thank Minister Scott for the incredible assistance he has given us in the last few years to move the issue forward.

Of course, how could we lose with a quarterback like you, Prime Minister?

Thank you, sir, for introducing the whole concept to us earlier, and of course, the Chair of the Federation Council, Ralph Klein.

Thank you, sir.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you.

I would now call on Clément Chartier,



President of the Métis National Council.

MR. CLÉMENT CHARTIER: Thank you,  
Prime Minister.

I am not sure about touchdowns and scores and such, but for the Métis Nation, we feel that we have had great success this past year.

To think in the year 2005, some 120 years after the unfortunate Battle of Batoche and the hanging of our leader, Louis Riel, we have made significant, significant progress in terms of our people.

Prime Minister, we have you to thank for that and we will always make that known, as we have over the last two days.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

MR. CLÉMENT CHARTIER: With the signing of the May 31st Framework Agreement, with your bold statements and coming forward over the past two years recognizing us as a people, recognizing the Métis Nation where no one dared go, we feel the meetings over the last two days for us has consolidated that in the mindset, I believe, of the Premiers, other leaders and, I think, of the Canadian public that had an opportunity to be able to observe this.

For us, that is very significant and it is not symbolism. Because we are a people, we are recognized as such and that is very meaningful.

The work, of course, is now cut out

for us. To go beyond recognition, we have to move towards implementing our rightful place within this Canadian society.

We have made it clear that even though we have the right of self-determination, we are exercising that right within Canada, within the confines of the Constitution of Canada, which we believe provides the key to the success not only of the Métis Nation and of all Aboriginal peoples, but in our case, the Métis Nation.

We have, as I say, a long road ahead of us in terms of addressing the key issues I raised earlier: land base for the Métis, the growth that we believe should be engaged in terms of our governance of our own people, the issue of dealing with the jurisdiction, which level of jurisdiction has -- or which government has the jurisdiction to deal with us, and we believe very firmly it is the federal government.

We want to see over the next several years moving forward on a government-to-government basis, a nation-to-nation basis, and by doing that, I believe, ultimately working on a distinction-based approach with the First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation that we will achieve what we are ascribing to do over the next 10 years in closing the gap.

For us, the door has been opened. I don't think we are in the porch. I think, if nothing

else, we are at least in the parlour, in the old ways that houses were made, or the living room, and I believe we are going to be able to, over the next 10 years, enjoy every part of the house that Canada is.

We feel very pleased because our people have always worked within the confines of Canada. We have protected Canada. Canada -- Western Canada could have been different. We could have been not Canada. We could have been possibly part of the United States, but we are here, we embrace Canada.

I just want to say thank you to you, Prime Minister, Minister Scott, Premiers, fellow Aboriginal leaders.

The announcements that are contained herein, Métis Nation-specific announcements in education, in housing, that to us is very significant.

The levels of commitment in terms of financing, well, we will work that out over the next few days. But actually when you are working from nothing, we have nowhere to go but up and I believe from what we have been told by your officials and by your Ministers, we are going to go a very significant way.

Once again, thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you.

I would now call on Chief Dwight

Dorey, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

CHIEF DWIGHT DOREY: Thank you, Prime Minister.

I have had occasion this morning at about the close of our meeting to think back just a few years ago when you were in a previous job -- and I am sure there are times it feels like it might have been a previous life -- but you had called me into your office one Saturday morning and asked to talk about Aboriginal issues and we spoke at length about some things like equality, equity of access. There was one subject we talked about 10 seconds, and that was it.

But I want to say that every issue that I raised with you that day has been addressed here in some way to some degree.

And, Premiers, I have been actively and consistently involved since 1977 when I first got elected as an Aboriginal leader. I have been to a lot of these meetings, I have been to international meetings on Aboriginal issues, and I can honestly say in all that time this has been one of the best meetings that I have ever been at, the most productive.

When I say the most productive, I mean even on some tough issues and even where I think some of us were not really clear in our own minds where we were going to go or whether we were even going to move on them, but we have.

I want to congratulate you, Prime Minister, Andy, and your entire Cabinet and every Premier around the table and every leader around the table because, in my view, we have seriously created some high-level optimism.

I believe for Aboriginal Canadians there is a sun rising over the horizon, and putting it in the perspective of games, as we were just talking about, Aboriginal Canadians are winners today, Canadians in general are winners today and I believe we all scored a touchdown today.

Thank you very much.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you.

I would now ask Beverly Jacobs, Native Women's Association of Canada.

MS BEVERLY JACOBS: I would like to also acknowledge this being a very historic event for Aboriginal people but also this is a historic event for Aboriginal women and I would like to thank you, actually, Prime Minister, for making sure that the Native Women's Association of Canada is at this table.

Thank you very much for that.

We, as you know, in the process that we took here in having all of the many voices of our organization to sit at this table to address the many different areas, I need to acknowledge those women as

well and our delegation for being here.

They too have very strong voices that need to be heard and that has been part of the difficulty. It is 2005 and the first time for Aboriginal Women to be sitting at this table is actually -- in looking at it overall, it is not very good in taking that long to come here but we acknowledge that it is a first step in coming to the table and know that it will continue.

But also in voicing our needs and voicing what needs to happen in our communities is about listening, and I know all of the Premiers and you and everyone here listened, but part of it now is about actioning, actioning what we have said and making a plan and making sure in every aspect of this action plan that women are a major part of that plan.

I know that you also committed to a National Aboriginal Women's summit and I have talked to many of the Premiers around the table who have agreed to participate in this summit to address violence against Aboriginal women.

Because violence is a key issue that is a major problem in our communities, not only in our communities as Aboriginal communities, our own men, but mainstream society and the perpetrators who are getting away with violating our women, the missing and murdered women across this country, the numbers, the high numbers,

the high percentages of our women in prison, that also needs to be addressed at this summit, and also our relationship to the land.

In my concluding remarks today, I was very serious about our relationship to the land and our relationship to the environment and our responsibility to that as human beings.

When we have that connection, not only as women but as Aboriginal people in general, our connection to the land, that is our responsibility and we know that it is everyone's responsibility.

I would like to also acknowledge National Chief Phil Fontaine for bringing this process forward with Premier Campbell and also your commitment to the issues of residential schools. I know that it is a major issue that affects all of us. Residential school has impacted every Aboriginal person in Canada and I have to acknowledge that.

But, again, when we are talking about financial commitments and money that is being addressed in our communities, that it is not the answer, the total answer, that we still have to address it as human beings and our attitudes that need to change and our actions that need to change.

I know that we are at this first stage and that we have a lot of work ahead of us, and as I have said, it will be a challenge but we are looking forward

to the challenge.

Thank you very much.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : Maintenant, nous sommes ouverts pour les questions.

We are now open to questions to any of the Aboriginal leaders, any of the Premiers, Minister or myself.

So over to the press.

MODERATOR: I would like to remind you we have about 20 minutes for questions.

One question and a short supplementary, please.

Nous avons environ 20 minutes pour les questions. Donc, une question et une très courte supplémentaire.

The first question is Liz Thompson, Montreal Gazette.

MS ELIZABETH THOMPSON: My question is for Mr. Martin and Premier Charest.

You have set targets, you have put money on the table, but how exactly do you plan to achieve those targets and how much -- if we take an area like health, what exactly is the federal government going to do to achieve those targets and what do you expect provinces like Quebec, for example, to do in achieving them?



RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Well, essentially what is going to happen here, as you know, or you may know that we have just signed the health blueprint with the Province of British Columbia and that blueprint contains the targets that we have set out that are in the documents that you have with you.

Essentially, what it says is we are going to now work with British Columbia with the added money that has been put into health care to achieve those targets here, and we will work with each province.

Therefore -- your question was directed to in terms of Quebec -- this will be a tripartite agreement that will be worked out with the Province of Quebec, with the Aboriginal leadership in Quebec, to essentially, based on the circumstances in the province, achieve those targets. That is what that extra money is going to be dedicated to doing.

MR. JEAN CHAREST: Thank you.

Well, let me start by saying that in the communiqué, the document that is also a communiqué, on page 8 there is a reference to health. There are things in that text that speak to your question, Elizabeth.

The first one is that we are going to act without duplication and creating parallel care systems.

Secondly, that the blueprint is a work

in progress and that is something the Prime Minister has just addressed in terms of completing.

And then tripartite agreements with every jurisdiction, which means that Nations will be able to speak for themselves, the Aboriginal leadership.

And finally, there is also another reference in that same text on page 8, something that I felt and Quebec felt very strongly about, is also the recognition of the special needs of the North and the Inuit regions of Canada because Quebec has Nunavik, a very important piece of Canada's North on our territory and we felt that was important to recognize.

For us in this conference, one of the important issues was the recognition of roles and responsibilities and the respect of constitutional responsibilities, and that is also in the text.

Why is that the case?

Because our view is that that is a prerequisite to making a plan operational, that unless you clarify that from the outset -- and we will do that in our respective tripartite agreements -- it is then difficult to implement a plan if you don't clearly assign responsibilities at the outset.

So we are satisfied that this text will allow us to do the job.

MS ELIZABETH THOMPSON: My follow-up question is: In the past, when provinces and the federal

government have sat down to work out tripartite agreements, et cetera, it can take years.

On top of that, you have the additional complication of a federal election coming up, possible changes in either minority, majority or even the party that governs.

What do you tell Aboriginal people who are waiting for better health care as to how long they may have to wait before you guys can hammer out a deal?

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Well, let me just say, first of all, that these targets were not just pulled out of thin air. These targets have, in fact, been worked out with the provinces individually. They have been worked out with the Aboriginal leadership in each and every case.

So essentially, we came to this meeting having worked out those targets because we didn't want to come here with a bunch of targets that we were not going to hit. We came here with a very clear decision that we wanted to hit those targets and the only way we could do it was to do the work with the Aboriginal leadership and the provinces before we got here.

In fact, as I have just pointed out, half an hour ago, we were able to sign the agreement with British Columbia.

I believe that we will be able to proceed very, very quickly.

And in the case -- from what Premier Charest has said, but every Premier around this table wants to hit those targets, understands those targets and essentially believes that we have made the commitment to hit those targets, and the only way we are going to do that is to work forthwith.

MR. JEAN CHAREST: We are, in Quebec, going to hold a forum with our Native leadership and communities in the month of May that will also include all sectors of Quebec society and that forum will take up the commitments that we have made here today.

So we already have set a moment, a time, a forum in which the follow-up will happen.

I would add that we have actually a pretty good track record of concluding agreements between both our governments, a very solid track record of accomplishment in that regard, an infrastructure on health, on parental leave, in agriculture in particular. So if that track record speaks to anything it speaks to, I think, the success we have had in concluding agreements.

In this case, failure is not an option. I think that one thing is clear from this conference, failure is not an option. The time has come to move ahead and that is what we are committed to doing.

MODERATOR: Bill Carey(ph), Globe and Mail.

MR. BILL CAREY: My question is for the Prime Minister.

Premier Klein was saying that you have agreed here at this meeting that Ottawa is constitutionally responsible for all Aborigines, including those off reserve, the Métis and the non-status.

So first of all, did you in fact agree to this change in the federal position?

Secondly, what do you think this will mean for the urban Aborigines who say that they predict they will continue to be left out of some of these programs because of jurisdictional fighting between Ottawa and the provinces?

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Ottawa has the prime fiduciary responsibility for Aborigines. These either arise out of the treaties signed by the Crown or, in fact, they arise out of the overall responsibility.

But we do not have two classes of citizens in this country. We have one class of citizens and they are all treated the same. Therefore, there is a difference between responsibilities on reserve and off reserve, which we all understand.

But essentially, what has happened here is that we brought a great deal of extra money to the table and that extra money is going to be used both on reserve and off reserve to ensure that in fact,

whether it be health care, whether it be education or whether it be housing, as I indicated in my opening remarks, that we work very, very closely together.

We are looking to do a partnership with the provinces in housing off reserve. We recognize that in terms of health care that there are special needs and we are going to meet those.

ANIMATEUR : Martine Biron,  
Radio-Canada.

Mme MARTINE BIRON : Je voudrais revenir, en français, sur l'aspect santé de cette entente-là.

Monsieur Charest, hier, puis encore aujourd'hui, parlait de rôles et responsabilités des provinces, et vous disiez plus tôt, l'échec n'était pas bienvenue, ou en fait, on ne pouvait pas avoir un échec ici aujourd'hui.

Par contre, ce que je comprends, c'est que la question de la santé n'est pas finalement réglée, que les textes de cette entente-là sont beaucoup plus un document de travail, qu'ils ont été passablement ramollis, en fait, ou ils sont un peu plus flous, justement pour permettre cette entente-là.

J'aimerais vous entendre, Monsieur Charest, mais aussi Monsieur Martin, sur cette question.

M. JEAN CHAREST : Alors, pour vous situer, lorsque la première réunion a eu lieu sur la

santé au mois de septembre 2004, vous vous rappellerez qu'une première partie de cette conférence était consacrée à une rencontre avec les leaders des communautés autochtones, que nous avons pris des engagements qui sont consignés dans un communiqué de presse, qui, à ce moment-là, nous engageait à clarifier les rôles et les responsabilités de part et d'autre et de le faire de façon concrète.

Or, depuis ce temps-là, il y a beaucoup de travail qui a été fait, et aujourd'hui, nous concluons ces consignes, aux pages 8 et 9 du document, sur des choses qui, du côté québécois, nous paraissaient très importantes.

D'abord, qu'on s'engage à ne pas faire de dédoublement, ni de système de parallèle; qu'on reconnaisse que le plan directeur est un document de travail; et troisièmement, que la mise en oeuvre se fera par le biais d'initiatives fédérales et par l'élaboration de plans, au niveau de chaque province et territoire, dans le cadre d'ententes tripartites qui respectent les rôles et responsabilités constitutionnelles des gouvernements.

Ça nous amène au coeur de votre question, puisque la mise en oeuvre de ce à quoi on s'engage ne peut pas se faire autrement que par des ententes tripartites dans chacune de nos juridictions, où chacun sera appelé à jouer son rôle en respectant ses

compétences constitutionnelles : le fédéral, le gouvernement du Québec chez nous et les Nations autochtones québécoises.

Alors, voilà comment on va faire la mise en oeuvre sur la base d'objectifs généraux qu'on s'est fixé.

Dans le cas du Québec, j'ajouterais un quatrième élément dans le texte, c'est la reconnaissance du Nord québécois comme étant inclus dans les régions inuits, entre autres. Ça, c'est un enjeu important pour nous pour qu'on puisse avoir accès au financement fédéral.

Alors, moi, je suis très satisfait de ce que nous avons aujourd'hui parce que le point de départ est le suivant. Si on doit mettre en oeuvre un plan, s'il doit être réel, ça commande qu'on clarifie au point de départ qui est responsable de quoi. À défaut de le faire, il y aura un obstacle important dans la mise en oeuvre du plan.

Alors, on s'est engagé à le faire. Le passé étant garant de l'avenir, moi, je suis très confiant pour la conclusion d'ententes tripartites.

Je conclus en vous rappelant qu'au mois de mai prochain, il y aura un sommet, un forum avec les Nations autochtones québécoises et l'ensemble de la société québécoise. Ce sera l'occasion de discuter de ces choses-là.



Monsieur Martin.

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : Absolument!

Lorsqu'un regarde chaque province, d'ailleurs, lorsqu'on regarde chaque ville, il faut dire qu'on reconnaît les différences.

Par exemple, la proportion d'Autochtones qui vivent dans l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard, en comparaison, par exemple, avec soit la Province du Manitoba ou la Province du Saskatchewan, c'est très différent.

Alors, il faut dire que ça va prendre... Lorsqu'on parle de tripartite, ça va prendre une approche qui est différente.

Même chose en Terre-Neuve. D'ailleurs, en Terre-Neuve puis en Labrador, il y a des différences fondamentales.

Alors, c'est tout à fait naturel que si ce qu'on veut faire c'est atteindre nos objectifs, ça va prendre une négociation, une entente pour atteindre ces objectifs avec chaque province, en incluant les Chefs autochtones.

C'est très important de dire que c'est vraiment tripartite. Ce n'est pas simplement entre provinces et le gouvernement canadien.

MODERATOR: Bruce (inaudible), Toronto Star.

QUESTION: A question for Mr. Martin,

perhaps Mr. McGuinty as well.

There has been a lot of talk around the table about the troubling conditions faced by Aborigines in the country. We have had the example of Kesheshewan and others where there are boil water advisories, squalid housing.

I am just wondering how, in a country as rich as this, how we got to this point where those kinds of conditions exist today.

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Well, I think the first thing is that today is a major step forward in dealing with the issue that you have just raised. Housing and water is one of the main topics that we have been dealing with and to which the federal government is adding extra funds.

I think that there are many reasons, primarily historical, for this and I think that there are some things that should have been done. I mean, there should have been much stronger regulatory measures taken in terms of water and that should have been done a long time ago.

So one of the things that, under Minister Scott, we are in the process of doing is saying that is it, we are going to have those. The mistake that was made was not training people on site to be able to operate the equipment that was there to clean the water.

I will give you an even better answer

and I am really picking it up Premier Doer and a story that he told when we were in the meeting of how there is one very large Indian band -- that is, if you don't mind that I do this, Gary, because I would hate to steal your story, but I am going to -- but I think it really explains the issue.

This is a First Nation in Manitoba that is on very low-lying land subject to flooding, subject to therefore bad water, subject to all of the problems that flow from it.

One day, Premier Doer was asked, probably at a meeting such as this, well, you know, why did those people choose that land?

The response was that in fact they didn't choose that land, that this was the Peguis land, who basically welcomed the settlers, helped the settlers, and then once the settlers had gotten there and gotten themselves well established, what they did is they moved the band off the land that they were on, which happens -- I gather -- to be a good portion of the best land in Winnipeg, and they moved them onto the low-lying land and then they left them there. So I think that there is a historical reason.

But the fact is a lot more should have been done and what has happened today is a lot more is going to be done.

HON. DALTON MCGUINITY: I really

appreciate that story, because I asked my -- this is the response from our water engineers when I asked them what can we do about it and their answer was: "They shouldn't have chosen to live there." And, of course, the Prime Minister has just explained Chief Peguis' community was moved there in 1910.

So I just want to say that I think this Prime Minister and the Aboriginal leaders have made more progress in bread-and-butter items or bannock-and-butter --

--- Laughter/Rires

HON. DALTON MCGUINITY: -- in the last week, when you count residential schools, than I have seen in my political life and reading history in the last 20 or 30 years.

It is not going to reverse -- if you look at sewer, water, housing, it is not going to reverse 100 years of Canadian history. But let us give credit where credit is due.

The Prime Minister has made more significant bread-and-butter commitments that will make a difference for Aboriginal people than I think any Prime Minister in the last number of decades.

We have a huge job, I believe, to deal with some of these sewer, water, housing issues. It is a marathon but we have really, really made progress this week and I give credit where credit is due, to the Prime

Minister.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

HON. DALTON MCGUINITY: Without going into the history of our water problems, Keshechewan served as a painful reminder that we have collectively come up short, and I think Kashechewan, in terms of its proximity to this meeting, served as a catalyst and impetus to our efforts.

I want to congratulate the Prime Minister for dedicating \$400 million to addressing our water infrastructure.

In response to some of the other questioners, it is human nature and perhaps profoundly Canadian to focus on what we have left undone rather than to celebrate what we have in fact done.

Three things have emerged from this meeting that I think are very significant.

For the first time ever, we have targets and specific timeframes with respect to measurable improvement and quality of life issues for Aboriginals.

Secondly, we have new resources supporting the achievement of those targets.

And finally, while there has always been a tremendous amount of good will, for the first time ever there is a strong consensus that now is the time to act.

We have yet to put together some solid plans to execute in a way that will help us achieve those targets but let us not lose sight of what we have in fact accomplished together. I think it is very, very significant.

ANIMATEUR : Sylvain Larocque, La Presse canadienne.

M. SYLVAIN LAROCQUE : Bonjour, Monsieur Martin. Je veux savoir combien de temps vous vous donnez pour discuter et négocier avec les provinces les transferts pour les ententes tripartites, et qu'est-ce qui va arriver si jamais, en tout cas, il y a un changement de gouvernement à Ottawa.

Pour Monsieur Charest, la question de... en fait, j'ai oublié. Je m'excuse. On va y aller avec monsieur Martin.

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : Combien de temps qu'on se donne? On commence immédiatement.

Comme je viens de le dire, on a déjà signé avec la Colombie-Britannique. Le Québec est déjà embarqué sur le processus. Toutes les autres provinces qui sont ici veulent qu'on fasse ça immédiatement.

Alors, il n'y aura pas un laps de temps significatif, je peux vous l'assurer. Alors, on va le faire le plus vite possible.

En ce qui concerne votre deuxième question, j'ai l'intention de revenir après les élections

pour compléter le travail.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

M. JEAN CHAREST : En ce qui concerne le Québec...

HON. JOHN HAMM: Prime Minister, I have my pen.

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: There you go.

M. JEAN CHAREST : ...il y un forum prévu au mois de mai. Donc, on va se mettre au travail avec le gouvernement fédéral pour tenter de faire avancer ça le plus rapidement possible pour le forum qui a lieu au mois de mai.

Peut-être que je peux me faire le porte-parole des collègues pour l'élection fédérale, et je pense que le gros bon sens, aujourd'hui, nous indique que tous les partis politiques fédéraux doivent, aujourd'hui, prendre acte de ce qui a été conclu ici, et l'occasion est belle pour que tous les partis politiques fédéraux, pendant la campagne électorale, réagissent aux conclusions de cette assemblée et qu'ils se prononcent sur le résultat.

Alors, c'est de bonne guerre que chacun puisse dire comment eux ont l'intention de composer, de réagir à ce qui a été conclu aujourd'hui.

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : C'est une très bonne idée. D'abord, je suis d'accord avec le Premier Charest.

Puis vous venez d'entendre là la négociation avec la Nouvelle-Écosse. On vient de la compléter là. Le Premier ministre vient de dire qu'il est prêt à signer.

M. SYLVAIN LAROCQUE : Brièvement, pour Monsieur Charest, c'est de savoir... Excusez-moi, j'ai encore oublié. Pardon.

M. JEAN CHAREST : C'est l'échéancier que vous vouliez?

MODERATOR: Okay, next question. Tara Nelson, Global.

MS TARA NELSON: For Chief Fontaine and for the Prime Minister.

There is money set aside in this deal specifically for accountability but what accountability do you envision that would make Aboriginal Canadians feel confident that they are going to get every penny that is in this deal?

CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE: Well, first of all, I want to note one important reminder and that is First Nation governments, First Nation government leaders embrace the principles of accountability, transparency and responsibility and have done so consistently and very effectively.

We are confident that the commitments -- and these are significant commitments, this has been an absolutely incredible week for us -- that we are going



to achieve those targets.

We have set targets. These are targets that are measurable. We will ensure that we are consistent in terms of measuring outcomes and outputs.

This is a condition that we have placed on these commitments and I am sure that the federal government is as committed as we are in ensuring that we meet all these targets.

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Absolutely.

Obviously, the question of accountability, transparency, openness and good governance is absolutely crucial. But I can tell you that while it is absolutely crucial for us, in all of our discussions with the Aboriginal leadership, it was absolutely crucial for them. This was not a question of us persuading them to do something. They very, very much felt that good governance was an essential part of this.

As the Grand Chief has just said, when you set targets, then you have to achieve your targets because they are measurable or people will judge you by the shortfall. So a factor is there is very little wiggle room. A target means you hit a target or you explain to people why you didn't meet it and what happened to the money that is going towards it. So the Chief is absolutely right.

I have also got to say that the idea of an ombudsman and the idea of a First Nations auditor

general was one that, in fact, came from the Grand Chief. He was the one that put this forth and said this is how I want to be measured.

And this goes with all of the Aboriginal leadership here. There was an immediate meeting of the minds that this was an essential part of the package.

ANIMATEUR : Marie-Paule Rouleau,  
Radio-Canada.

Mme MARIE-PAULE ROULEAU : Monsieur Martin, étant donné que vous avez parlé de la Coupe Grey, je vais me permettre de vous poser une question sur Bono, qui est à Ottawa aujourd'hui.

Bono a dit qu'il vous aimait beaucoup personnellement, mais que vous alliez sans doute payer en terme de votes le jour des prochaines élections pour ne pas avoir atteint la cible du .07 pour cent d'aide aux pays en développement.

Alors, j'aimerais savoir quelle réponse vous souhaitez lui donner.

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : Comme vous le savez, Bono, c'est un grand ami, et je lui ai parlé ce matin. D'ailleurs, je lui ai parlé juste avant de rentrer ici. On a passer 10-15 minutes sur le téléphone.

D'abord, je devrais le dire, il voulait nous féliciter. Il m'a félicité, puis il voulait féliciter tous ceux qui sont autour de la table de

l'entente d'aujourd'hui, parce que lorsqu'on parle de sous-développement, on parle vraiment des problèmes de pauvreté. Alors, ça très bien marché.

Je lui ai dit que son rôle -- puis il le sait -- son rôle, c'est de me pousser, et moi, mon rôle, c'est éventuellement de décider que je vais atteindre le cible de 0.7. J'ai l'intention de le faire.

Mais comme on vient de le voir, aujourd'hui, on a atteint. On n'établir pas des objectifs si on n'a pas un plan très clair pour y arriver.

Moi, je pense qu'il y a un problème au niveau mondial. Le nombre de pays qui se sont consacrés à des objectifs pour les tsunamis, pour l'aide au développement au Pakistan, qui ont fait les photos op, puis après ça ont renié à leurs engagements, moi, le Canada sous moi, ne ferait jamais cela, et je vous l'ai dit.

Mme MARIE-PAULE ROULEAU : Bono dit aussi que, étant donné que le Canada est le seul pays du G8 qui a des surplus, vous devriez donner l'exemple.

Est-ce que ça pourrait faire l'objet d'une promesse en campagne électorale, le .07?

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : Moi, je n'ai pas l'intention de faire des promesses. J'ai l'intention vraiment d'atteindre des objectifs très clairs.

On va y arriver. Le 0.7, on va y

arriver, mais je vais vous donner une date lorsque je suis convaincu que le Canada va pouvoir l'atteindre, comme on a fait aujourd'hui.

MODERATOR: We have time for two more questions.

Terry Halifax(ph), Inuvialuit Communication Society.

MR. TERRY HALIFAX: Mr. Prime Minister, since much of the North cannot be described as on or off reserve, is there going to be any difference as how these services will be delivered to First Nations and Aboriginal people who have settled land claims?

And secondly, was there any discussion about a funding formula that would take into account the vast distances between people and their services up there?

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Your question actually is a very important one. It was one that was raised by Premier Handley during the meeting, as it was by Premier Okalik and by Premier Fentie.

We recognize the difference in the North. In the way in which this is going to be worked out, obviously that difference is going to have to be taken into account. In fact, it may well be that that could have been recognized within the communiqué and we actually talked about it.

I did commit, in fact, to basically --

I am glad you asked the question -- to point out that that was discussed and the differences between the North and the South are ones that we have to take into account.

I think Premier Okalik would like to speak.

HON. PAUL OKALIK: Thank you.

Yes, the issue was discussed in detail and it is an ongoing issue with other federal programs.

But in terms of delivery of services, we have been doing that as a government. Even though it is a federal responsibility, it is nice to see that we are finally getting commitments as Inuit that we are entitled to some federal programs and assistance in housing, assistance in education and assistance in health.

We have gone some way with health but it is great to see that we are finally making progress in terms of getting assistance as Aboriginal people in the North.

So I appreciate the good will of the Prime Minister and I look forward to more progress on the other files. Qujannamuk.

HON. JOSEPH HANDLEY: In the Northwest Territories, we appreciate the \$5 billion and look forward to a fair share of that.

This is particularly important to us at a time when the Northwest Territories is generating

incredible wealth, from diamonds, from oil and gas, and we cannot have Aboriginal people, who make up 50 per cent of our population, living in poverty, in a situation where we are generating huge wealth for across the country.

So that is an issue that has to be sorted out and I really appreciate the commitment the Prime Minister has made to work with us to do that in a way that is fair to all Aboriginal people.

Thank you.

HON. DENNIS FENTIE: If I may just briefly say that this has been a long time coming and I think it is fair that we express our gratitude to this Prime Minister and his government because finally we have a federal government that recognizes the uniqueness in the North and the challenges that we face and also recognizes the culture and identity that we have in the North.

So what we have accomplished here today with the support of all is the fact that we in the North are now going to get the attention required so that we can progress in these many areas, close the gaps in housing, health care, education and develop economic opportunities for the Aboriginal people of the North. That is a very significant step forward.

MODERATOR: Last question.

Greg McCullough, Omni.

MR. GREG McCULLOUGH: This question is for the Prime Minister and any of the native leaders and, in particular, Chief Fontaine.

With what you are announcing today, how hopeful are you that the levels of militancy and armed protests will be a thing of the past? How do you think it will be a thing of the past?

The second question I have for all of you is I have heard from several people at this table that we should meet twice in the next five years, not wait another 10 years or another 135 years. So the question on that is when are all of you getting back together, when and what date will that be?

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Canadians -- on your first question, and then obviously the Grand Chief will answer this in more detail than I could -- Canadians demonstrate their views. That is part of our system and I don't think that they will ever stop.

On your second question, we have agreed that there will be another meeting sometime between the second and the third year. Essentially, what we want to do is we want to have that meeting as soon as we are in a position to basically measure the results to see how we are doing in case there is a mid-term correction that is required.

CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE: What we have tried to present to the country is a commitment to a new

-- well, not a new approach -- but a process of engagement with all governments. We have tried to demonstrate that the most effective way of achieving change is through meetings such as this, through negotiations, through discussions.

I believe that the outcomes this week demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach most clearly and there is absolutely no intention on my part and the people that I work with to a change in this approach. We are absolutely committed to transformative change through dialogue and negotiations.

HON. GARY DOER: Beverly Jacobs raised some very, very -- I think for all of us -- very disturbing analysis of the situation in Canada for Aboriginal women. She has proposed to the Prime Minister or you proposed in response to have a summit on the disappearance of Aboriginal women and all the other systemic issues that we must deal with as a society.

I heard Premier Williams and others speak to that point. So I am sure the next issue we are going to be addressing, the next meeting we are going to be attending is going to be the proposal that you have answered to.

I just want to make that point because this is -- all of these issues are works in progress, so to speak, and none of them can be dropped off the table for two and a half years. So I accept the challenge that



was issued to us.

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: If I might, I think that is really -- I should have raised it and I thank you, Gary, for doing it. I think that is very important.

What has happened here is just an overwhelming conviction that this country, rich as it is, simply cannot allow a condition of a huge gap in health care, in education, of opportunity and of housing to exist between one segment of its society and that segment of its society which is the youngest and the fastest growing. This is a moral issue and we will meet as often as it takes to basically make sure that those gaps are eliminated.

I think that the point that was raised in terms of Aboriginal women, as Gary has just said, is one that I think struck every one of us. Whatever the issue, there is to be no doubt we are going to solve it.

HON. LORNE CALVERT: Mr. Prime Minister, just to recall some of the further discussion that we do not make fundamental social programs without good fundamental economic progress.

We have talked about putting together an Aboriginal economic summit. I have invited colleagues and Aboriginal leaders to do this in Saskatchewan over the course of the next year, to put together not just governance leadership but business leadership, labour

leadership, academic leadership to speak to issues of economic opportunity and economic development.

RT. HON. PAUL MARTIN: Thank you, Premier Calvert.

Le Premier ministre Charest?

M. JEAN CHAREST : Non, ça va.

TRÈS HON. PAUL MARTIN : Ça va. O.K.

MODERATOR: Is there a supplementary?

MR. GREG McCULLOUGH: Yes, to Chief Fontaine.

Considering what you just said about meetings are the best place for this to happen, many people in this room may agree but there are young natives out there who are fed up with their situation, they are fed up that their parents were abused or they were abused in residential schools.

Okay, a meeting, it is 10 years more money. What is in it for them? Why should they not go out and protest outside your office? There are some of them protesting outside right now. What do you have to say to them to tell them, make them believe you and what you just said?

CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE: Our views are not much different than those that are being expressed in a different way outside.

The leadership in the First Nation community is also fed up with our situation. We are

tired of being poor. We are tired of high unemployment. We are not happy with the fact that we can't access quality health care. We desperately want safe drinking water. We want better schools. We want our people to be employed. We want all of the things that people take for granted.

Our commitment is to bring about change. We have worked very, very hard to come forward with a plan, as I said earlier, that is so compelling and so convincing that all of the governments at this table would accept as the way forward.

I believe that we have demonstrated the enormous opportunities and possibilities through this approach and all I can say to those people that we represent, including those outside: Trust us. We will transform our community. We will ensure that every child that wants to be educated will have an opportunity, every family that needs a house will have a house, every person that wants to be employed will be employed.

That is the commitment that we bring to this table.

--- Applause / Applaudissements

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. This concludes this press conference. Ceci met fin à cette conférence de presse.

--- 2:54 p.m. / 14 hr 54