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—
Chair

Mr. Colin Mayes

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC)): Committee members, you have the orders of the day before you.

Today, to look at Bill C-292, an Act to implement the Kelowna Accord, we have as witnesses the Right Honourable Paul Martin, LaSalle—Émard; the Honourable Ralph Goodale, Wascana, and Mr. Goodale apparently will be here about 9:30; and the Honourable Andy Scott, Fredericton.

Committee members, before we move to hearing from the witnesses, I have an urgent letter from the minister. Because of the nature of the letter, I'd like to read it to you. It has to do with the Pikangikum.

He says:

I am writing to ask your Committee to carry out an immediate investigation regarding the circumstances faced by the Pikangikum First Nation in northwestern Ontario. I am asking the Committee to travel to Pikangikum as soon as possible, and I am requesting that you meet with representatives of that Community and carry out all other necessary hearings and investigations. I would ask that you then report back to me on the difficulties that this community has encountered in the past in relation to infrastructure and governance.

I am advised that an extensive record exists, documenting the difficulties faced by the community and the Department vis-a-vis road access to the community, the absence of electrical service, the availability of water hook-up, and the adequacy of community school facilities. I understand that there has also been a prolonged and divisive dispute between the Government of Canada and this First Nation relative to governance and related financial and managerial issues.

These questions are of concern to me and I would appreciate the benefit of the thoughts of your Committee members following a visit to the community and a review of the historical record.

I would appreciate receiving your advice as quickly as possible.

The letter is signed by the Hon. Jim Prentice, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Committee members, I would like to ask if you would respond to that letter, please.

Madam Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the minister for putting that before the committee.

I guess my question is whether appropriate protocol has been followed. Have the chief and elders been advised that the committee would like to travel there, and have they been receptive? Protocol dictates that we must be invited before we can actually go to their community.

The Chair: That's a good point.

Would it be to the pleasure of the committee that committee members would write the community and ask for that invitation?

Madam Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

My first question is whether the minister has been there himself. Has he conducted an investigation?

I'm wondering whether it would be useful, before we made a decision, to review the record that you have spoken of. Then we can make a decision. I'm aware of some of the circumstances at Pikangikum. It's not an easy environment to move into. I don't know whether, with 12, 14, or 15 people coming in, we will get a realistic picture of what is going on at Pikangikum.

I'd like to see the record. I'm not averse to going in, but I need more information. I strongly agree with what Ms. Crowder says. I don't think it's incumbent upon us to plunk ourselves in without some discussion on it. And I do want to know whether the minister and/or his close representatives have been there.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Based on the information that we have heard on the situation in this community, I think it would be an excellent idea for our committee to try to learn as much as we can, and there's no better way to get a sense for the situation than by actually going to the site and learning first-hand what the needs of this community are.

So I would be, of course, more than happy to take up this task, and I would recommend to the committee that we do so.

The Chair: Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Chairman, we were asked—and that includes the minister—to go to that location. If we are to go there, then I would like to read the documents and find out about the minister's position. I have no intention of going to a place I do not know without even knowing the background. I would not want us, the committee members, to show up as tourists in that community, which appears to me to be in serious difficulty.

We have work to do today concerning Bill C-292. In any event, my position and the position of the Bloc Québécois is the following: we need to be provided with relevant information and then decide at the next meeting. However, I find that deciding this morning on a precise date to go there is definitely premature.

● (0910)

[English]

The Chair: We have witnesses, so I don't want to prolong this.

I think what I'm hearing from the committee is that, first of all, you would like some documentation on the issues around Pikangikum. Then we'll take from that and look at the request from the minister and respond to that request.

Madam Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I agree, except that if we're even contemplating this, we must contact the elders and the chief and council to make sure they would even consider our visit. That's an important part of protocol.

The Chair: Correct. And would the committee prefer to get the information first, or request the chief and council?

Hon. Anita Neville: I have one small comment, Mr. Chair. My colleague the member of Parliament from that area is in fact visiting Pikangikum today, as we speak. It might be wise to ask him to make a report to the committee before 15 of us jump on a plane and land in a small community. That would be one of my recommendations.

The Chair: I'm going to take this under advisement and I'll get back to the committee, because we are taking up too much time of our witnesses and we have something to discuss now.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to see if we could get more information on this request and also some background information. And maybe the committee would consider speaking to the member from this constituency and get his report of where it stands.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Might I put on the record, Mr. Chair, that it is highly irregular for the minister to be trying to direct the work of a committee. If a member of Parliament suggested this in terms of his own riding, or the chief and council asked Parliament to look into this, that would be one thing. I simply want it to be on the record that this is very irregular.

The minister can send us legislation. The minister is not to direct the work of this committee.

The Chair: The minister is requesting counsel, and I don't think that's—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: [*Inaudible—Editor*] based on the last 15 years.

The Chair: The minister is looking for counsel on this as assistance. He's not looking for direction, necessarily.

I'm going to leave it at that, and we're going to move on to allow the witnesses ample time to make their presentations and to allow you to ask your good questions.

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Martin.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): First of all Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and the other members of the committee for having invited me in connection with the review of Bill C-292.

[English]

Mr. Chair, I want to thank you for the opportunity you're providing Mr. Goodale, Mr. Scott and me to speak to you as you commence consideration of Bill C-292, An Act to implement the Kelowna Accord.

What is the accord about? First and foremost, it's about reducing the shameful gaps between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians, gaps that exist no matter where they reside, gaps in health, in education, in housing, in clean water and economic opportunity.

It's about working better. It's about governments and aboriginal leaders, working in partnership and in collaboration, finding new, innovative solutions, holding ourselves accountable by setting targets and by reporting on results.

Each of the policy areas agreed upon in Kelowna was subject to careful cabinet consideration. They were fully costed and built into the fiscal framework. I want to state without any equivocation—and I'm sure the former Minister of Finance who was with me will confirm this—that the \$5.1 billion committed to in Kelowna was fully within the fiscal framework. Any suggestion that we had not accounted for these expenditures is without foundation.

[Translation]

The Kelowna Accord was what triggered a specific commitment: over a 10-year period, to take steps to reduce an unacceptable socioeconomic divide.

The accord commits the government authorities, whether federal, provincial or territorial, to develop implementation plans and to set objectives for each of the provinces and territories, working together with the appropriate Aboriginal authorities in each province and territory.

● (0915)

[English]

Mr. Scott and I, for example, following Kelowna, were able to conclude with the Government of British Columbia and the British Columbia first nations leadership the Transformative Change Accord, which is a focused action plan that sets out specific shared goals and the steps to achieve them, all in the areas, as I've mentioned, of education, clean water, health, housing, and economic opportunities. This was the first of what would have been action plans in each part of the country to allow us to tailor approaches to the unique circumstances of aboriginal Canadians in each province or territory.

Mr. Chairman, the question really is partnership and collaboration, innovative solutions, hard targets, and reporting on results. Why does anybody want to shy away from this? Why would anybody object to hard targets, to all of the governments coming together to deal with the very issues that are at the foundation of the shameful poverty in which aboriginal Canadians find themselves?

On September 12, 2004, first ministers and national aboriginal leaders met to address important aboriginal health issues. At that meeting we made a federal investment of \$700 million in the aboriginal health blueprint. This was to help build modern, integrated health services for first nations and other aboriginal Canadians, and to train aboriginal health professionals to work in nursing and in medicine.

At that time, the first ministers and aboriginal leaders agreed that there should be a first ministers meeting directed at the root causes of aboriginal poverty. This was the beginning of a journey that 14 months later led us to our destination—the meeting held in Kelowna, British Columbia.

Those short months allowed all governments and each of the aboriginal organizations to consult academics, community professionals, and experts. Those months allowed all of the aboriginal leadership gathered under the various organizations to ensure that all who were present were equipped with the best solutions, both in and out of the box, going into the meeting.

As first ministers, we were determined in Kelowna, Mr. Chairman, to develop better harmonization of programs and services, recognizing the central role of aboriginal governments and service providers in this whole area and seeking to end the jurisdictional turnstile that limits program efficiency and effectiveness.

For instance, the aboriginal health blueprint was designed to ensure for the first time that we had a seamless harmonization of our health delivery systems for aboriginal Canadians in every province and territory. Officials and ministers worked to ensure that the issues of aboriginal women were front and centre, and we committed at Kelowna to hold an aboriginal women's summit to move forward on issues too long ignored. That summit should have been held by now.

We worked to ensure that no longer was the Métis nation excluded from intergovernmental processes and that all governments were committed to ensuring Métis-specific adaptation of programs and services. We worked hard to ensure programs for the Inuit that were tailored to work in the unique conditions of northern Canada, and we worked to ensure that for the first time ever, federal funding was available to assist provinces and territories in adapting approaches to serve the very pressing needs of the growing urban aboriginal population in very significant ways.

[*Translation*]

All of the governments agreed that education was essential for any progress to be made, and that it was the key factor in improving the economic status of Aboriginal Canadians, and for providing them with better employment prospects, for giving them the means to exploit economic opportunities, and in general improve their health and living conditions.

We agreed under the Kelowna Accord to establish a regional school system for the first nations and to provide them the support

they desire in addition to the legal authority needed to implement modern institutional structures and to manage institutions responsibly so that young Aboriginal people can be provided with a quality education.

The provinces and territories committed to this and agreed to cooperate in setting up such a system, to ensure that it would mesh with the existing public education system and train future teachers and education professionals to work in these institutions under the authority of the first nations. They also made a commitment to take various measures to improve learning conditions for young Aboriginal people in the public education institutions that most of them attend.

These measures include the following: encouraging family participation in education; establishing local objectives about the number of young Aboriginal people completing Grade 12; facilitating the transition of public education systems to the new first nations education system and vice-versa; working together with Aboriginal educators and parents to meet the needs of children encountering learning difficulties and on curriculum development; lastly, and this is every bit as important, to increase the number of teachers and education professionals who are Aboriginal people and to increase the Aboriginal content of programs of study dispensed in each province and territory.

• (0920)

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, I could speak to the other innovative aspects of the Kelowna accord. Undoubtedly, we will get into this in the discussion to follow. But given the time constraints, let me close by speaking to a very different area of importance. That is the agreement that all governments, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, are to hold themselves accountable to reporting publicly on progress.

Governments have never been short on rhetoric when it comes to the aboriginal file. Setting agreed-upon objectives, establishing regional targets, and public reporting were designed to ensure that all governments—aboriginal and non-aboriginal, federal, provincial, and territorial—were accountable for progress. In this way, the results, not rhetoric, become the objective. Despair would be replaced by hope as we move forward. We set ambitious targets to eliminate the gaps in educational achievement and housing and to make significant strides in health care and clean water. Mr. Chairman, these targets are fully achievable with the right innovation, investment, and partnership.

A new forum of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers, and aboriginal leaders would ensure progress and keep us on track. The accord specified this forum would meet annually and that it would be mandated to take corrective action. This forum, Mr. Chairman, should be meeting now. The days of empty promises were over, to be replaced by a focus on the results achieved and the successes won. What all of us believed is that we had to establish an accountability framework, and that the setting of goals, the reporting of data, and the court of public opinion would ensure that each government and each organization would challenge its respective officials and institutional partners to make progress. In that way, real results would benchmark the track that we were on, to share the best practices based on what each jurisdiction was doing better than another, to bring progress everywhere, and to ensure that no one was left behind.

Parliament and parliamentarians now have the opportunity to act. All the parties to the Kelowna accord—the aboriginal leadership; provincial and territorial governments, of all political stripes; and all opposition parties in the House—support the Kelowna accord. They support its goals and its principles.

Mr. Chairman, the Government of Canada gave its word in Kelowna. So let me just say that first ministers, aboriginal leaders, and Canadians across the country are watching us. I would encourage all members of this committee to support the speedy passage of Bill C-292.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

We'll begin with Madam Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Mr. Chair

Thank you, Mr. Martin.

There are two lines of questioning that I would follow or ask you to respond to, from amongst the three of you who are here this morning. I'd like you to expand on the difference that Kelowna made for relationships and the importance of relationships in developing the Kelowna accord and moving forward on the Kelowna accord.

We know many of the items that you have identified, Mr. Martin, are being picked at and small measures are being implemented or are being talked about, more to the point. I would be interested in having something on the record on what Kelowna did in terms of the relationship.

And my second line of questioning is to you, Mr. Goodale, because I want it on the table right from the outset. Mr. Goodale, Mr. Martin was emphatic in stating that the \$5.1 billion to implement Kelowna over the five years was indeed provided for in the fiscal framework before the previous government left office. I'm wondering if you, as the then Minister of Finance, could tell us how that provision was made. How explicit was that provision? Was it there in a bulk amount? Was it broken down into various categories described at the Kelowna meeting? And on the document or instrument that has been described by many as the sources and uses table, how easily can it be changed? Was it changed at the Kelowna meeting? Was it changed before or after the turnover? And can you tell us whether you have any corroborating evidence on this issue?

Again, to recap—I've been going on too long—I'd like a comment on the relationships and a comment on the financial aspects of Kelowna.

• (0925)

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Thank you, Ms. Neville.

I don't think there's any doubt—and I think this will be confirmed by everyone who was at Kelowna—that Kelowna had a tremendously positive effect on relationships. I simply ask you to go back to long before Confederation. The relationship between Canada's aboriginal peoples and the government in Ottawa has consisted of the government in Ottawa telling, dictating, imposing, and the aboriginal Canadians having to accept, with no buy-in. The kinds of problems that we're facing in terms of health care and education, the problems involving our youngest and fastest growing segment of our population, are not going to be solved by a central government or provincial government simply dictating the answer. There has to be a buy-in, and that buy-in only comes if you work together.

That's why Kelowna didn't take place only in Kelowna that day. Kelowna began over a year and a half earlier, when we began to work together in round table after round table—and Mr. Scott can go into this. That's what really built and meant to build its success. And that's why, in fact, the relationship was so strong coming out of Kelowna. It was for precisely that reason: for the first time, there was a true partnership.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Ms. Neville, I appreciate the questions, and without getting too abstract about the way the Department of Finance works, let me just say that Mr. Martin has been emphatic about the money issue, and so have I, because it's true.

There is a document within the Department of Finance that is maintained and updated on a regular basis. It is known as the sources and uses table, which you referred to. This is the instrument by which the Minister of Finance keeps a running tally of the revenues coming in and the expenditures going out, especially between the annual budgets and the formal fall update. You could say that the spring budget is the ultimate sources and uses table and that the fall update is the penultimate table. But government has to function all the time, not just twice a year. So the sources and uses table is that ongoing, up-to-date tally of the government's fiscal position.

As Mr. Martin has said, the Kelowna accord was the product of 18 months of hard work and consultation among the Government of Canada, the provinces and territories, and Canada's aboriginal organizations. In the several weeks leading up to Kelowna, the federal cabinet examined and approved the policy ideas that the Government of Canada would put forward at the meeting. They were debated and costed by Mr. Scott's officials in INAC and by my officials in the Department of Finance. The Prime Minister and I agreed upon a financial envelope in the range of \$5.1 billion to \$5.2 billion to meet the policy decisions that the government had taken.

When I presented the 2005 economic and fiscal update on November 14, the Kelowna meeting of course had not yet been held and the accord had not yet been concluded at that point, but we were at that point able to anticipate where things were headed. So in the update, I signalled the importance of the Kelowna process and the items that would be coming from the Kelowna meeting, and I committed to investing, as Minister of Finance on behalf of Canadians, in the outcomes of the Kelowna meeting, and the money was earmarked for that purpose.

The meeting was held 10 days after the fiscal update, on November 24. The results were exactly what we anticipated. They were announced, as Mr. Martin has indicated, and the booking of the required money in fact occurred on November 24, 2005, in the sources and uses table bearing that date, under the heading "Post Update Decisions"—not plans, not ideas, not suggestions, not vague notions. The word was "decisions", and the amount booked was \$5.096 billion.

It was broken down into the various categories that Kelowna discussed: education, housing and water, governance, economic opportunities, and health. Those are the policy areas that Mr. Scott led in the discussions, and that created the frame for the Kelowna outcomes.

How easily can the sources and uses table be changed? Not very easily. Once something is in the table, it can't be taken out unless you have the explicit concurrence of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

If you want to come back to the issue of corroboration at a later stage in the questioning, I would be happy to offer some of that.

● (0930)

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

From the Bloc, Mr. Lemay, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I might—and I apologize in advance—find myself saying Mr. Prime Minister when addressing Mr. Martin, given that he was the Prime Minister of Canada when we worked on the Kelowna Accord and were negotiating nation to nation.

Mr. Martin, I have reread the speech you gave at the opening of the Kelowna meeting. Please allow me to read from it, if only the following short passage:

I am mentioning this simply to illustrate a fact that we can all agree is true, not only in remote Northern communities, but also on too many reserves and in too many cities—the existence of an unacceptable gap between the bright hopes of youth and the life experience of adult Aboriginal people. The gap is all the more unacceptable given that young people represent that part of Canada's youth that is growing most rapidly. We are facing a moral imperative: in a country as rich as ours, and which is the envy of the world, proper health care and a good education ought to be taken for granted; they are the tools that make equality of opportunity possible—which is the very foundation upon which our society is built.

Mr. Martin, do you believe that the current government's failure to comply with the Kelowna Accord is threatening the things you said at the Kelowna meeting?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I can very brief.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Could you repeat that please?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Your question demands a brief response, and that response is yes. It does threaten the direction that we, you, the provincial and territorial governments and the Aboriginal chiefs identified, which is to say the need to remedy the absolutely unacceptable situation that you have just described.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Martin, the Kelowna Accord provided for a number of things, including an investment of approximately \$300 million over five years for housing on the reserves. It is happenstance, but you may have noticed this morning that there was a housing crisis on several reserves. It is urgent to intervene.

Based on your estimates, out of the 80,000 housing units required across Canada, how many could have been built with this \$300 million?

● (0935)

Right Hon. Paul Martin: The amount is certainly not sufficiently high to fill the gap, but it would certainly allow for significant progress.

I would also like to add that for housing, the total we discussed was over \$1.6 billion, which is much more than \$300 million. In any event, you are right: \$300 million would certainly be a good start. You are also right to say that the Kelowna Accord is not the end of the road, but rather the very beginning.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Goodale, you explained earlier to my colleague Ms. Neville that around the time of the Kelowna meeting, the estimated budget was approximately \$5.1 billion. My question is very precise: where did this money go? We have not heard anything about it. We would like to know what happened to it. I would imagine that the first nations and Inuit who are listening to us would also like to know.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Monsieur Lemay, the last sources and uses table to which I had access was the one I referred to in my response to Ms. Neville, the one dated November 24, 2005. In that table the provision was made explicitly for the \$5.096 billion.

As I answered in my very brief answer at the end of the questioning by Ms. Neville, the sources and uses table cannot be changed. Once an item is in the sources and uses table and committed to by policy decisions of the Government of Canada, with the policy consent of cabinet, the financial consent of the Minister of Finance, and the executive authority of the Prime Minister, it can't be changed unless the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance decide to reverse their position.

I can assure you that in the time between November 24 and the change of government in the early part of February 2006, Mr. Martin and I did not change our minds, and the money was there on February 6, 2006.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Was this \$5 billion in addition to the funds that the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada already had for current operations?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Yes.

The Chair: Madame Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, Mr. Martin, for coming before the committee today on Bill C-292.

Clearly the NDP supports Bill C-292, as it did the Kelowna accord.

I have a bit of a statement to make. I am deeply troubled by the fact that the issues around poverty, water, housing, economic development, and all of those issues are not issues that just arose in the last couple of years. There is long-standing, well-documented evidence that for decades the neglect in first nations, Inuit, and Métis communities has been substantial. I would argue that both your Liberal government and past Conservative governments have a great debt owing to first nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples across the country.

I could name the communities now that are in crisis: Pikangikum, Kashechewan, Penelakut, Garden Hill, where we are talking about TB outbreaks, rheumatic fever.... It is shocking. The Teslin Tlingit people right now have a land claim that has been signed off, yet implementation is going exceedingly slowly. We can come back to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples of 1996. I have a few of the recommendations here, of which I would suspect very few have been implemented. And you mentioned the tripartite agreement that was signed in Kelowna, British Columbia.

Certainly the first nations leadership in British Columbia took the Kelowna accord on good faith. They subsequently signed an agreement between you, Premier Campbell, and the first nations leadership in British Columbia and in fact documented targets, goals, substantial time lines, and those kinds of things.

I am completely baffled at how a country like Canada that purports to be a champion of human rights and equality could wait until 2005 to take some steps that could be considered meaningful.

I wonder if you could comment on that.

• (0940)

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Chair, there have been over the course of the last number of years some very extensive studies on the relationship, and on the policies of the Government of Canada and of a number of other provincial governments going back to Confederation and then to union governments before Confederation, regarding how aboriginal issues were dealt with. I don't think any Canadian reading those would feel very proud of what transpired.

The point you're making in asking how this could have happened over these years may be explained by the circumstances of the time, but I don't think I would buy that as an answer. I think this has been a very deeply human issue in which paternalistic policies misapplied have led to the situation in which we now find ourselves.

Let me just answer for one second.

Ms. Jean Crowder: May I ask you to include, though, in your answer what it is it we need to do to break this logjam?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I've got to say that if you look at the debates in the House of Commons, in which all the political parties who have been here historically were involved, you find very little

debate that really focused on the human tragedy and the need to turn it around. I think the answer is that we all bear our share of the blame. I think the aboriginal leadership also must step forward and accept its responsibilities.

The question you now ask is what we should do. I believe that the course in which we should engage includes the original meetings between the aboriginal leadership and cabinet, the round tables that Mr. Scott engaged in right across the country—because they have to be involved—and then the setting of very clear targets and the commitment of money to achieve them. That is by far the best answer.

I think you are absolutely right. I wish it had been done much earlier.

A lot was done earlier with the healing fund and the aboriginal head start program, but I think this is the first time a policy with such a comprehensive nature has been followed. Mr. Scott may want to complement this, but I do believe that this is the right course.

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Ms. Crowder, I think that the same honest desperation that I can hear in your voice led us to bring together 475 aboriginal leaders and 22 cabinet ministers in April 2004 to say, let's fix this. This is a blight on our country. It's a blight on our governments. And everybody has to accept responsibility for what the situation was in April 2004.

I think nobody is proud of that history. Everybody is embarrassed by this history. Let's fix it.

A lot of this is about that, and a lot of this is about trust. A lot of this is about collaboration. So in April we met. As a group, we together decided on the six areas that we were going to study. I was the minister of housing at the time. That September we started with health, coincidentally, because there was a first ministers meeting on health. The aboriginal leaders were rightfully saying, "You said we'd have a seat at the table; we want to be there". They were, and we did the health piece.

That winter we took all six areas for deliberation and had round tables all over Canada. I attended all of them. At that time it became apparent to me that there was going to be a significant resource issue. Also everywhere we went, it became obvious that we were going to have to engage the provinces.

I held a meeting on March 17 with the provinces.

I'm sorry...?

• (0945)

The Chair: You have twenty seconds.

Hon. Andy Scott: May 31 was the policy retreat. In June it was the provinces again with the aboriginal leaders, and then in November it was Kelowna.

The point I'm making is that this was a 14-month deliberative process to deal exactly with what you suggested. You asked the former Prime Minister what he would do. The reality is that if it were me, I'd do this over again if that's what it took, but that seems to me to be an unnecessary step backwards.

I think this is the solution, and the provinces believe it. They believed it. Now they're worried about money, so the provinces are not going to step up, because they don't want to step up if there are no resources.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, did you bring a copy of the Kelowna accord with you today?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: No, I didn't, but we can certainly get one for you very quickly. There are a lot of them available.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: You'd think you would have brought a copy today.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Probably not, because I assumed that you had read it. It was tabled in the House of Commons.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, there is a press release. I think that's what you're referring to. That's what was tabled in the House—a news release of November 25. Clearly, it is not an accord. Perhaps I'm not as learned a parliamentarian as you are, but I do know that an accord has a signature page.

I was wondering if perhaps you could indicate the time at which this accord was signed by the 13 leaders that you met with?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: All 13 leaders at a publicly televised meeting stood up and endorsed the accord, as did the leadership—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, we watched that on television. We didn't see a signature.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I'm answering you. And following that, there was a signed agreement with the province of British Columbia to have a transformative change agreement.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I didn't ask about the British Columbia agreement. I was asking about this document that you're referring to.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: No, wait. May I?

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Go ahead.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: If you had been there, you would have seen it. If you had looked on television—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I was watching on television.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Well, then you saw it. You saw the provincial leaders—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I didn't see the signatures. I didn't see any signing.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: You saw the provincial leaders and the Prime Minister of Canada all stand up and endorse the accord. You saw it happen. You saw the official signing with the Premier of British Columbia of the—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: We didn't see a signing in Kelowna.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: —of the Transformative Change Accord with the Province of British Columbia.

The issue really is, and I simply put it to you, that you can debate around it the way you want. You can say what happened on television never happened. You can say that in fact reality is unreality, but the one thing you cannot—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, clearly you've indicated that there is no signed accord. You've indicated that here.

The Chair: The one thing you cannot do is deny that this agreement took place and that what they laid out was a path to the future. And the question—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, we're right now debating whether or not we can implement a Kelowna accord according to the bill that you're putting before Parliament, and if there is no signed accord, how can we implement it?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Just before you do, what I don't understand is why aren't you concerned with the human tragedy that's taking place? Why aren't you concerned about how we accomplish—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I'm very concerned with the human tragedy. That's why I ran for Parliament, and that's why I want to end the deception that you're currently putting before the people of Canada, especially aboriginal people.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Scott.

Hon. Andy Scott: If I may, the—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: This question is for Mr. Martin.

• (0950)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: No, it's not up to you.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: This isn't question period; this is answer period. I'm asking of Mr. Martin.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Now, this is rudeness.

Hon. Andy Scott: I was invited to be a witness here.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Yes. I'm asking these questions of Mr. Martin, though.

The Chair: Mr. Martin, go ahead, please.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: It is very hard—

The Chair: Could we just have some order? Could you ask the question, Mr. Bruinooge, so Mr. Martin can address the question?

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, you often referred to British Columbia in some of your statements, and I'm going to read a statement by Minister de Jong: "The thing is that what is referred to as the Kelowna accord was actually a summary of discussion that didn't end up in any signed-off package."

Since, again, there is no signed accord, how can we attempt to implement a bill that calls upon an accord?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. de Jong's government signed the Transformative Change Accord between British Columbia and the federal government. I have met with Mr. de Jong. I would suggest you might call him to this committee and ask him if he doesn't think that Kelowna shouldn't go ahead.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: He was referring to the Kelowna accord and the fact that there was no signed document. He wasn't referring to his accord that he had; there's no question about that having taken place.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Why don't you invite the British Columbia Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. de Jong, to this committee and ask him if he thinks that the Kelowna accord should proceed? Ask him.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, how long after a *Globe and Mail* reporter coined the phrase "Kelowna accord" about a month after the first ministers meeting did you adopt it as part of the communications strategy of the last election campaign?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: It was called the Kelowna accord from day one.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: No, it wasn't, Mr. Martin.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Were you there?

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Well, I was watching on television.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Well, I was there. It was called the Kelowna accord from the very beginning.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: No, it wasn't—not at the time.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: In fact, it was called—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: The first time we have it on record is about a month later.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Well, with the greatest respect, it was actually called the Kelowna accord before we said that's what we're going to do.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Do I have more time?

The Chair: You have a couple more minutes.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Great.

Mr. Martin, are you pursuing this as a legacy item, perhaps due to the fact that the only legacy it seems you have is the fact that your nemesis served you up a rather large political grenade in terms of the sponsorship scandal? Is this something that you're attempting to use as a legacy item?

The Chair: We are meeting on the subject of the agreement, please. Could you rephrase that, Mr. Bruinooge?

Order.

Mr. Bruinooge, could you rephrase that, please?

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, it's the deception, though, that I want to point out, and that's what I've been pointing out today. It's the fact that time after time through the last 13 years we've seen aboriginal people left off the page, and it wasn't until the last moment of your administration that you brought forward this Hail Mary pass to attempt to create the perception that you're attempting to do something for aboriginal people.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: There are two legacies here. One is the legacy that has been described by the members of the opposition on this side of the table, which is a legacy that no Canadian can be proud of, which is the human tragedy that has occurred to aboriginals. That is one legacy that we are trying to remedy. Fundamentally, we want to make that better.

The second legacy.... And I must say that I just fail to understand that when the members on this side of the table, the opposition, have essentially said this is something that we want to deal with, you come to this table and you do nothing else but read your party's

speaking points and try to score partisan political points as opposed to dealing with the fundamental issues that we're dealing with here.

All Canadian governments, going back to Confederation, have a responsibility, and there is a record of which none of us can be proud.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I agree with you 100% on that point.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: What we're all saying is let's deal with it, and for heaven's sake, let's stop playing politics. If you want to say, we think it's not right, then let's try now to deal with the fundamental issue.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: That's what, unfortunately, this is about, Mr. Martin. Here you come before the committee with your two former ministers, pretending that you're still the Prime Minister of Canada.

The Chair: We've run out of time. Thank you. We'll move on.

Mr. Merasty.

Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to take what I think needs to happen here, a bit more of a responsible road in this process here in the committee. I'm very honoured to have all our witnesses speak to us this morning. I think very clearly we've established the process leading up to the Kelowna accord. There was no napkin that was utilized here. It was broadcast. There were real premiers, I believe, in attendance there. And I think there were real aboriginal people in attendance.

As a matter of fact, I recall that the Saskatchewan legislature passed an all-party motion calling upon the Kelowna accord to be implemented, so they obviously think it's real, and the process leading up to it was real. And the B.C. government, the Premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell, and others....

So I think we've established the process that led to the establishment of the Kelowna accord. I was involved in many different ways, and I know the Saskatchewan aboriginal leadership coined "the Kelowna Accord" leading up to it.

There are two questions on which I want further clarification. We talked about the process. The two other criticisms we've heard from the government are that there were no plans and there was no money. Now we've taken care of the process; it occurred. They said there were no plans. Perhaps there needs to be an understanding—and this is something that our party and the three of you went through—that the best solutions to aboriginal issues came from the community in the last two or three decades and that the lesson learned was that we needed to turn to the community for the development of these specific plans.

Could you maybe elaborate a bit on that, Mr. Scott?

● (0955)

Hon. Andy Scott: Thank you very much.

The fundamental premise behind this exercise was the collaboration and inclusion on the basis of the fact that most, if not all, of the failures of the past can be attributed to the unilateral—well-intentioned perhaps, but unilateral—actions by national and provincial governments, in my view. So the collaboration happened.

In terms of dealing with the content—and this was collaboratively, deliberately established content—in fact, the substance behind the Kelowna accord would be a very large number of documents that are available to the government right now. I myself probably took 10 or 15 memos to cabinet on content, government decisions that we were going to do this. Once the government decided that they wanted to do it, I would go back to the Department of Indian Affairs and they would cost it. Then I'd have to come back to cabinet to secure the funding that Mr. Goodale was talking about, an elaborate system, and there were four ministers involved, because I did education and negotiations, Mr. Alcock did accountability, and Minister Emerson did economic development. Mr. Emerson went to cabinet with a plan for economic development and got approval from the government for that plan.

All those things came forward, all those things were costed, and the money was secured for all of it. So if the government genuinely wanted to implement the Kelowna accord, it could do so immediately, because the content is there, the collaboration is there, the support from the provinces and the first nations is there, and the money was there. So there's no question that it could be done. If it has to be done over again, as tragic as that would be, I would encourage that, because the model exists.

Mr. Gary Merasty: I think this year we've heard this government talk about investing more than any other government in the past, and I think in the appearance of the minister at the last meeting, he acknowledged that none of this year's budget has gone through. In fact, the cuts, if I add them, lead to a net loss to first nations communities to date.

Talking about the money, Mr. Goodale, you talked about the corroboration and you expanded a bit on that with Mr. Lemay. Can you tell me the significance of the Prime Minister and the finance minister having to actually step in and take the money away? Can you maybe explain that process a bit better?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: It never did happen under Mr. Martin's mandate. As I said to Monsieur Lemay, when we left office in the early part of February the money remained booked in the fiscal framework, as we had earlier indicated. Obviously, at some point after that date someone decided to go in a different direction. The money was removed and used for some other purpose.

Mr. Gary Merasty: A handshake is key with the leaders who were in—

The Chair: Unfortunately we can't. We're moving on to the government side.

Mr. Blaney, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): I would like to thank the witnesses for having come to meet us this morning.

Mr. Martin, I would like to tell you that with Mr. Harper, our government has gone beyond the discussions held in Kelowna with

respect to improving the living conditions for the first nations. As you know, spending in the last budget was higher than in all previous budgets, including Mr. Goodale's.

One thing was also demonstrated, namely that there never was an agreement. We know that there was a press release, but nothing was signed with the first nations. I think that this became very clear this morning. I feel that the first nations now want to be a party to the decisions.

I am thinking of the first nations in Quebec that were not involved in the exercise. I am thinking also of Mr. Picard, who said:

Who are we trying to fool by announcing three, four or five billion dollars in Kelowna to magically combat poverty...

You spoke this morning about the \$300 million for housing. The problem is that to meet the needs of the Quebec reserves alone, the total required would be \$1.5 billion. We feel, Mr. Martin, that we have begun an exercise, well after the Kelowna meeting, working together with the first nations and the Government of Quebec. This happened a few months ago in Mashteuiatsh. I was there.

I would like to know how we can add money without making structural changes. I would like to hear your comments on this subject. I would also like to know what you think of Mr. Picard's statement to the effect that he felt he had been fooled by the Kelowna Accord.

• (1000)

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Merasty just said that in the Aboriginal communities, a handshake amounted to an agreement. He said that they had shaken hands and that this was an agreement between the governments and the Aboriginal leadership.

Mr. Steven Blaney: Mr. Martin, Aboriginal women were not in attendance, and the provincial governments did not sign the accord.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: If I may, I would like to add some details. As Mr. Scott just said, there was an agreement with British Columbia and also the Prime Minister of Saskatchewan who said that there was an agreement. They were both there and everyone who saw the event on television could see that there had been an agreement. I do not understand why you are so emphatic about denying the reality rather than discuss education, health, illness, in short the situation in which people find themselves.

As for Mr. Picard's statement, I know that at the summit held in Quebec a week ago, he said that he had been very disappointed with the reaction of the Conservative government, which went there, but did not stay and did not put anything on the table.

Mr. Steven Blaney: It was at the joint press conference, Mr. Martin. Mr. Prentice was there and he made a commitment. There was a follow-up agreement, which was not the case for the Kelowna Accord. I am keen to pursue the work of this committee once we will have finished debating this motion. Then we will be able to talk about housing, which is an urgent problem in the communities, Mr. Martin. Structural changes need to be made, which was not discussed at all in the press releases from Kelowna.

I have another question.

[English]

The Chair: Can I ask the member to direct his question, please?

[Translation]

Mr. Steven Blaney: I would like to know what you think about the statement made by my colleague on the other side of the table, Mr. Lemay. He said:

...let's not delude ourselves, the Kelowna Accord is nothing more than a provisional measure that will not do anything to improve the long-term living conditions for Aboriginal peoples.

If we have not yet been able to manage to make significant structural changes, why should we not work on concrete solutions, for example with respect to housing?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Let's begin by putting our cards on the table. For housing, it is not \$300 million but \$1.6 billion. If the Kelowna Accord was adopted, that money would be spent on housing.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Blaney, would you give Mr. Martin the opportunity to respond to that question, please?

[Translation]

Right Hon. Paul Martin: You asked me the question, so allow me to answer it. So we're talking about \$1.6 million; if you adopt the Kelowna Accord, the money is there.

Second, when Mr. Lemay says that the Kelowna is a foundation that must be built on, then I fully agree with him. The Kelowna Accord really provides the framework, the money and the capacity to measure results from which it will be possible to build.

If the government tells us that it wants to take this farther, we will be the first to applaud it.

[English]

The Chair: We've run out of time.

Mr. Asselin, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Messrs. Martin, Goodale and Scott, I represent the riding of greater Manicouagan in Quebec, on the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River, where there are several Aboriginal communities, all of which are Montagnais: Betsiamite, Uashat-Maliotenam, Mingan, Pointe-Parent, Romaine, Saint-Augustin, Shefferville and a number of others.

Mr. Martin, the government and the three opposition parties need to agree to on the fact that the Kelowna Accord is essential. Bill C-292 must be adopted if the government is to deal with the needs of the Aboriginal communities.

After several years of discussions, I would even say after a very long time, we were nevertheless able to come to an agreement that gave a glimmer of hope to the Aboriginal communities that were expecting help from the federal government. The Aboriginal communities have health, housing, drinking water and education

problems, and a very high level of poverty, all of which compromise their quality of life.

The Kelowna Accord was debated in the House of Commons and put to a vote on several occasions. Even if the three opposition parties, which form a majority in the House of Commons, were to adopt Bill C-292, there could still be a problem: according to information provided by the chairman, royal recommendation is required to enact this bill.

Mr. Martin, as a former Minister of Finance and former Prime Minister, could you tell us whether you think that Bill C-292 can be enacted if Parliament does not grant royal recommendation.

• (1005)

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Your question is very relevant.

The government has the option. The House of Commons will have spoken: that will leave only a final stage to go through. But if the government refuses royal recommendation, this will mean that the government, with respect to the education, health and housing for Aboriginal peoples, is not interested in improving the situation.

On the other hand, it could very well be that there are ways of getting around this obstacle by making use of a number of procedures. And I tell you this not because I lack hope. Ultimately, the government will have to come to a decision on this matter. Does it want the Aboriginal peoples in our country to have the same opportunities as other citizens? If it refuses the Kelowna Accord, their response will be clear. I cannot believe that Canadians will find this acceptable.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lemay, for two minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Martin, Mr. Scott or Mr. Goodale, I too was at Mashteuatsh and witnessed a government recycling effort of \$3.8 million for health. These amounts had already been announced. The good achievement was the First Nations Building at the University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, but that was provided by the Minister of Economic Development.

How can we, the three opposition parties, go ahead and implement the Kelowna Accord if the government refuses to do so? What are we to do?

Where are the \$5 billion? Mr. Goodale or Mr. Scott, you had started talking. Have you heard anything about this in recent months? Where has the \$5 billion that the first nations have been waiting for since November 25, 2005 gone?

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott: It was redirected by the government to other things. There's no other explanation. Having said that, though, part of causing Parliament to have the outcome we want is that the members on the government side have not been given much of the information.

For instance, Mr. Blaney just asked a question about how you can just fix the problem in terms of housing without the kind of deliberative policy consideration that would change the system, improve the system, transform it. All of that exists. Mr. Fontana spent hours on social housing. All of these things were debated and discussed. There was collaboration with the first nations on and off reserve and in the north, and with the Métis, for hours.

The bottom line is that the information necessary to make the decision that this group would like made exists. The fact that you don't know that probably explains the problem a little bit.

● (1010)

The Chair: Mr. Albrecht.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm a new member on this committee. In one of my first meetings with Prime Minister Harper, I requested to serve on this aboriginal affairs committee not because of any specific expertise, but because I have a strong desire to see aboriginal issues advanced, to see issues of poverty, education, shortfalls, and so on, addressed.

I actually thought that when I came to this committee, we, as a committee, would sit down and work collaboratively to move ahead on addressing many of the changes that need to be made. Instead, week after week, month after month, we've been here for I don't know how many meetings, and we have spent inordinate amounts of time discussing this so-called Kelowna accord. We've ignored all of the positive things that our government has brought forward in terms of budgeting initiatives and studies that we could have been doing. Instead we're wasting all of this time not only at this committee, Mr. Chair, but in the House, talking about a so-called accord that does not exist, an accord that does not have clear benchmarks—at least I have not seen any—in terms of accountability and expectations.

I have not heard a stronger message in terms of wanting accountability than that coming from our aboriginal groups in these last number of months. So, Mr. Martin, my question is how you could recommend that we proceed with a bill that has no clear measures of accountability and reporting.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Precisely because that's what Kelowna is designed to do.

I really do believe you're sincere in wanting to deal with this, so I just don't understand why the government insists on making Kelowna a partisan issue when no one else in the House of Commons wants to do it, yet we're all from very different political parties. So let me just go back.

Why is Kelowna important? It's important because the result of that year and a half of work was that all of the aboriginal leadership went back to their people and there was a huge involvement. All of the provinces and territories were onside. This doesn't happen. Having spent a lot of time on federal-provincial relations, I know it doesn't happen all the time that you get that total unanimity of opinion. Now you have that. You have that structure. You have that national will expressed through Kelowna, which could go on.

Now, when you talk about the measurement and you talk about what is supposed to happen and what has not happened for the last

nine months, it is being done region by region, province by province. There's no doubt that the targets and the way you go at in British Columbia may be different from that in Quebec. They may be different in Newfoundland and Labrador with the Innu than they will be in Saskatchewan with the Cree, or with the Inuit. There's a specific set of targets for the Inuit, as for the Métis nation.

So what Kelowna says is to work out the individual plans as long as the result is to achieve the national target, and then to do measurements every two to three years. That was a request of the provinces.

You're right in your question, so let's get at it. Let's stop wasting time.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Martin, at different times you've accused us of denying reality. During your presentation, I heard you say at least three different times something to the effect that each of the aboriginal groups, all of the aboriginal leadership, all governments....

I just want to go on record, Mr. Martin, as saying that is not factual. Not all aboriginal groups were there. In fact, some of the aboriginal groups stood around in protest to be allowed admission into the discussions at the last minute. The Province of Quebec, represented by Ghislain Picard, was not there.

So how can you say all of these groups were there? How can I trust the rest of your presentation when you continually say all of the groups were there?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Well, the five national organizations were there. The fact that not every community was there...obviously, there was no hall big enough to have held every community. The five national organizations that were speaking on behalf of their memberships were there. We all understand that. I understand the way these committees work.

Why do you deny the objectives of the Kelowna accord?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The question's going the wrong way here.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I know, but what the heck....

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: You're confusing me.

Actually, Mr. Albrecht, we have run out of time and I'm going to move on to Madam Crowder, please.

● (1015)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you once again for your patience with this process.

I want to reiterate a point that was made earlier. I'm very disappointed that the committee and the House spend an inordinate amount of time arguing about whether Kelowna was a signed legal document or whatever.

In my experience and in my understanding of working with first nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, many of the first nations people rely on an oral tradition and, hence, these long discussions that took place face to face, in a respectful way, led to an expectation that, whether or not there was a signed legal document, there was a spirit and an intent around what happened that signalled to first nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, the provincial government, and the federal government that there was an intention to move forward.

Much has been made about the fact that there were no timelines and what not. I won't read this entire document, but this is the B.C. tripartite Transformative Change Accord in which the leadership in British Columbia—the first nations leadership and the Province of British Columbia—actually sat down and took the discussions that happened in Kelowna and documented clear, concrete, detailed steps, such as K to 12 completion rates, the number of first nations teacher, and K to 12 curriculum models, and said, we trust that Kelowna happened and that it's going to become a reality.

I want to come back to a comment you made in your earlier statement about leadership. Back in the RCAP report, there were any number of recommendations around leadership, around nation-to-nation status. For example, one of them talked about this: “The federal government, following extensive consultations with Aboriginal peoples, establish an Aboriginal parliament whose main function is to provide advice to the House of Commons and the Senate on legislation and constitutional matters relating to Aboriginal peoples.”

I would argue that unless first nations, Métis, and Inuit leadership are at the table on an equal basis, not only in the consultation process but in the actual decision-making process...because too often what happens is that we come out and we ask lovely questions and we have a great consultation process and then we shut the door on people's faces and say, you're not at the table when we're actually going to make the decisions.

I'd like you to comment on what elements of leadership you see that are absolutely essential for us to move forward the spirit and intent of the Kelowna accord and to make sure we can be addressing those very critical issues in first nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I think you've actually summarized the situation very well. Aboriginal leadership has to be at the table. If we've not done as well as we should, which is understating the situation over these last 150 years, it is because they were not at the table and they didn't buy in. In fact, the decisions were made by people who really did not understand the conditions under which aboriginals live.

We did—and Andy can go into this—as much as we possibly could. For the first time, we had a cabinet committee at the very beginning meet with the aboriginal leadership for precisely the reason that you have given, which is to say that they have to be at the table and might as well be at the table, not just with the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs but with all of the other ministers who make decisions that impact upon them.

And that's what Kelowna says. Kelowna says, here's how we work together. What should now be happening is, rather than denying

Kelowna, as you have said, we should now be doing that and working together.

Can I just pick up on your opening point? You talked about the oral tradition, and Mr. Merasty talked about it as well. You're dead on. I've talked to the aboriginal leadership, and they said this is the way we make decisions. I'd like to add something to that, about the way in which we make decisions, because you've just spoken, and I think quite well, for the aboriginal leadership. All of the provincial and territorial leaders were around that table. I have attended many meetings with provincial and territorial leaders, both as finance minister and as Prime Minister. At the end of a meeting, when somebody gives you his or her word, you don't ask them to write it down.

I gave my word, as the Prime Minister of Canada, not only to the aboriginal leadership but to the provincial and territorial leaders of this country, and they were entitled to take my word, and they gave me their word, and I didn't ask them to write it down. When the premier of a province or of a territory gives me his or her word, I'll accept it.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

Can we move on to Mr. Storseth, please.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I can see the honourable member has an ample amount of experience with question period. I have to say, though, that I find this to be a bit of a sad day to see a former Prime Minister so desperate to rewrite history and to grasp for a legacy that he is willing to do it through a private member's bill.

Can you point to any factual information for this committee that would validate your promises made in the press release tabled by your House leader on June 1, 2006?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Goodale says he would like to answer, but I would like to answer the first part of your question.

First of all, a former Prime Minister does it through a private member's bill because the current government does not appear to respect the word of the Government of Canada when it gives it to the leadership of the aboriginal peoples in this country and when it gives it to premiers and territorial leaders.

Second, a former Prime Minister is really quite proud to do it through a private member's bill. I happen to think that members of Parliament play a very important role in this country. I have never believed that Parliament was a body that was some kind of afterthought. I think that the Parliament of Canada and these committees play an essential role.

Mr. Brian Storseth: With all due respect, sir, I'd like to hear the factual information you have that's going to lead up to it.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I would suggest that if you don't want the answers to the questions, perhaps you shouldn't use them in your preambles.

Mr. Goodale, you'd like to answer.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: This goes directly to the issue of corroboration, and let me give you three.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Excuse me, sir. Mr. Goodale is a learned member of this House, but with all due respect, I would like to hear from your former boss, who was also a finance minister and I am sure can answer this question.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: It's an amazing effort at obfuscation. It is truly remarkable that you've been given these crib notes from your communications department to malign and insult and abuse, rather than listening to the facts. It's appalling.

The Chair: Excuse me, there is a question—

Mr. Brian Storseth: You obviously don't want to answer the question.

You talked about the sources and uses—

The Chair: Mr. Storseth, I am the chair of the meeting. Please listen to me.

The question has been asked, and I will ask Mr. Martin to answer that question.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Do you want to re-ask the question?

I'm quite happy to answer it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Brian Storseth: It is my understanding that the sources and uses table you talked about cannot be changed unless you get express written consent from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. Is this true?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Yes. You don't need written consent, but you're absolutely right that the sources and uses table cannot be changed unless the Minister of Finance, presumably with the full accord of the Prime Minister of the country, okays it. I can tell you that the Minister of Finance did not ask me, and I did not authorize any change in the sources and uses table.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you.

In your time as Minister of Finance or Prime Minister, have you ever changed this table?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: These tables change, obviously, with the evolution of time. But if you're asking did I ever take an amount out of there that was committed in a government program, I can't think of it.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you.

The last question I'd like to get to is actually Ms. Crowder's question. I thought she had an excellent question for you.

You talked about shameful gaps between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians. You talked about shameful poverty that first nations find themselves in. You talked about access to a quality education. These are all things that you talked about. And Ms. Crowder basically asked whether it actually took you 13 years to understand that these issues needed to be addressed. I don't want to once again hear you compare your government to pre-Confederation or paternalistic policies. I would like to simply ask, did it actually take you 13 years in cabinet and as Prime Minister of this country to understand that these issues needed to be addressed?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I don't know how much time you're going to give me, but I have about three pages of things that were done over the last 13 years, from the \$700 million to health care, to the aboriginal head start program, to the \$100 million for broadband, the \$62 million share of the gas tax, the \$340 million to strengthen aboriginal social foundations. I can go through a long list, but I'm not sure it's particularly helpful. The fact of the matter is that an enormous amount was done.

What's different with Kelowna is that it laid the foundation, as in fact the members of the opposition have said, for a very different and much more comprehensive partnership going ahead.

• (1025)

Mr. Brian Storseth: Is it true, sir, that during the nineties you capped—

The Chair: No, Mr. Storseth, you are finished.

Ms. Karetak-Lindell, please.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Thank you.

I'm puzzled as to where to even start. I can start by saying I'm very saddened by what I'm hearing this morning, but I'm also quite disappointed.

We as a committee usually work very respectfully. I was at a dinner last night telling my guests that we're very respectful of each other, of other members, in the House of Commons and especially at committee, but I might have to rethink that. I thought we had a certain protocol that we practised here, but I have to say if they can't even practise protocol at committee, no wonder they don't believe that protocol.

The Chair: Let's direct ourselves to the question, please.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: My key here is that I'm an aboriginal Canadian. I'm an Inuit and I'm proud of that. I can stand firmly, I can speak on behalf of Inuit and be confident that I'm speaking for Inuit with Inuit. I know what Kelowna means to me and the people I represent.

As previous speakers have said, when a prime minister of a country gives their word to a group of people, we take that at face value. We were also at the highest level of talks as an aboriginal group in Canada. We were at the national table speaking with the Prime Minister of the country, who directed many of his cabinet ministers to also be at that table, to also make it a priority in their mandate to deal with aboriginal Canadians.

I don't know what more a group of people in Canada can ask for than to be assured by the Prime Minister that he has directed his cabinet ministers to make this a priority, to improve the lives of Canadians. The only thing I can see with the current government in terms of being at the table is to refer to a napkin, which is as close to the table as we can get these days.

So my question is very simple. I know what Kelowna means to me and the people I represent. What did Kelowna mean to you on a personal basis?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I'd like to actually ask Andy, who was so involved, also to answer that.

It meant an enormous amount, and the reason it meant so much is the opportunity that I had to speak to the aboriginal leadership that day, but also the opportunity that I had in the subsequent weeks to talk to young men and women just about their situation.

The statistics of infant mortality, of shortened life expectancy, of disease, of tuberculosis, of AIDS, they're cold statistics in a room like this, but they're a reality in the communities where it's all happening. The hope in their eyes and certainly in mine.... There's no doubt about it, I believe this was a very important event. What we were doing was going to make significant steps and we were going to measure ourselves toward solving it.

I have to say to you that it meant an enormous amount to me, and it's really why I don't think this committee should be engaging in a lot of partisan discussion. I really think the committee should come together and say, how would we as Canadians deal with it?

Andy.

Hon. Andy Scott: Clearly, and I would assume this of any member of Parliament, nobody can deny this is a blight on the history of our country. Nobody can, I assume, deny the desire to deal with this, and I would argue it's very difficult to deny that Kelowna wasn't and isn't our best shot. Ask the community, ask the premiers. That is a reality.

I keep getting the question of proof. The proof exists. It's in the government's archives. I don't know where you put such things. All of the collaboration that is necessary to validate everything we're saying exists in the Privy Council. You can't go to cabinet...I don't know how many times I personally went to cabinet with ideas, seeking money, having decisions. Those records of decisions exist, whether it's transformation in housing or education. To the question that was asked by Mr. Storseth about whether there is any evidence of this, the clear and unequivocal answer is yes, just go to your government and get it.

•(1030)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Martin, I just have to go back to some of your comments relating to verbal commitments, and I just have to point out that if you're making a deal with the Liberal government, clearly you're going to need more than that; it's not how we settle land claims and it's not how we settle treaties. It's important for all parties involved that they're signed, so the government has a tangible document to point to.

I'd like to talk a bit about your promising \$5 billion on the eve of the election. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation tallied up about \$24 billion in promises that were supposed to come out of the untabulated surplus from the coming budget. How could you possibly have come through on all of those promises?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Well, first of all, as Mr. Goodale has said, the \$5 billion was fully costed and was built into the

framework. The numbers we provided were based on that assumption. The promises we made during the election campaign were all promises that took into account the government's cashflow, and may I simply say to you that the Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty, announced not that long ago the last Liberal surplus, which happened to be \$13 billion.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, it's not a Liberal surplus; it's a surplus of the taxpayers of Canada, the people who work hard each day and who pay tax to our government. It's truly not your money; it's not our money.

But I'd actually like to go back to your time as finance minister during the nineties. Why did you leave funding for aboriginal groups capped at 2% throughout your term, when you knew full well the population was exploding?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Let me just say two things. First of all, there is no doubt those surpluses are Canadian surpluses, which belong to the people of Canada. There is no doubt that the remarkable turnaround that took place in the financial condition of this country over the last decade was because Canadians worked together, and what that shows is that when Canadians work together, they can accomplish great things. No other country has been able to do what we did as a nation over the course of the last 10 years in taking huge deficits into surpluses.

What we're saying now in the case of Kelowna is that it's the ability to work together as a nation towards very clear objectives that will allow us to take on anything. If we can go from having the worst financial condition of any G7 country to having the best in the course of a decade, then surely to heaven we can deal with the issues of aboriginal disease, life expectancy and infant mortality, by working together. That's what we're saying.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, unfortunately you left it until the last moment of your political career in order to be able to expend all your political capital through the nineties on other measures. It wasn't until the last second that you decided to point to the aboriginal people, people who needed it, and—

•(1035)

Right Hon. Paul Martin: That's absolute nonsense.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, I'd like to ask you this. Perhaps you could explain to us why you didn't look at the system itself through which benefits flow to aboriginal people. Instead of just throwing dollars at the problem, you could perhaps have worked with a former colleague on the first nations governance act, but instead you let that die and you didn't want to pursue it.

But, Mr. Martin, I'd like to ask you a question about a quote I've recently read in this interesting book. You were quoted in this interesting book, *The Way It Works: Inside Ottawa*:

Mr. Martin always argued vigorously - even at times of budget surpluses - against the prime minister's support for...increase in foreign aid. One day as we sat in the living room at 24 Sussex, Martin...told the prime minister in all seriousness that because many aboriginal Canadians live in third world conditions, federal spending on aboriginals should be counted as the equivalent of foreign aid! But when Chrétien then suggested increasing the budget for aboriginals, the finance minister argued that enough was already being spent.

Did you say that?

The Chair: There are only 30 seconds.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Okay, then let me just deal with the first part and the second part.

Throwing money at a situation? Was \$300 million for the healing fund, \$2 billion for the residential schools, throwing money at something? I don't think so.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: The system itself needed to be improved. You neglected that.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: That was money we directed to a very real problem that had to be dealt with, and I feel very proud of the \$300 million and the \$2 billion. I feel very proud of aboriginal head start program. I feel very proud of a number of measures that were taken over the course of the last decade.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: The system wasn't working.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: And I feel very proud that a year and a half before Kelowna took place, the first action of this government was to put in place that system.

The Chair: Thank you. We're out of time.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My colleague has one quick comment, and then I will pick it up.

The Chair: Sorry, Ms. Neville, it's actually the Bloc.

Mr. Lemay, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I'm pleased about this because I was never a member of the last two governments, either of the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party, and I will not be a member, I am pretty sure. I apologize to our guests this morning, but I am dumbfounded to hear the parliamentary secretary say things that I would describe, to say the very least, as irresponsible.

A project is being discussed. We are this morning debating a project about Aboriginal peoples, the first nations, the Inuit, whom we have left in need for too long. We had a plan, the Kelowna Accord, and the party in power has never been able to tell us where the money has gone, the \$5 billion provided under this accord. I am still in shock. One thing is certain, the matter will not rest there.

I was at Mashteuiatsh. Stop telling me stories. I saw what you did. You did nothing at Mashteuiatsh, except rehash the announcement that had already been made. What I want to know is where the \$5 billion went. The Kelowna Accord is something the first nations need and the Inuit need.

We've been told that the accord was reached in no time at all, and that it is Mr. Martin's political legacy, and Mr. Goodale's as well, as if you are all about to retire. I would like you to explain one thing to

me. I have heard it said that it took a year and a half to negotiate this accord. I would therefore like you to explain to us—please don't take a year and a half to explain it to us, but perhaps a minute and a half—what happened during that year and a half that led the Aboriginal peoples to gather together on November 24 and 25, 2005? That is what I would like to know. You could perhaps explain it at the same time to my Conservative colleagues.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I am going to ask Mr. Scott, who was intimately involved in the process during that year and a half, to answer your question. The first thing I wanted to do as Prime Minister was to organize a meeting between the Aboriginal leaders and Cabinet. It was a public meeting to really kick-start the process.

Mr. Marc Lemay: What date was that on?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: It was in the month of April 2004. We had begun even earlier to discuss the agreement on health. At the time, the provinces and the Aboriginal peoples asked us to negotiate a comprehensive accord. We therefore immediately got discussions underway.

I would ask Mr. Scott to give you the details.

[*English*]

Hon. Andy Scott: The Kelowna process began in April 2004, when 475 aboriginal organizations got together and chose the five national organizations that would carry it forward.

The next significant date was the meeting in September 2004, when the first ministers met on health. That's where the \$700 million came from and where the commitment was made for a first ministers meeting on aboriginal issues for the following fall in Kelowna. The idea of that first ministers meeting was born at the health first ministers meeting in September 2004.

All the work that was done and all of the substance that validates everything we say that is contained within the records of the Government of Canada—all of those decisions—was done collaboratively, including dealing with the issues of systems, accountability, and governance. All of those things were not imposed and arrived at from on high, but were done collaboratively with the community. We were essentially trying to recognize that the mistake of the past was that everything was done unilaterally from the top down.

The next series of meetings happened over the winter of 2004-05, when we took the six areas and had round tables on them across Canada. The critics were there, everybody was invited, and members of Parliament from all political parties were there. Then we met with the aboriginal affairs ministers from the provinces in Winnipeg on March 16. They needed to be included because to that point it was still bilateral, between the Government of Canada and the community.

The very important policy agreement that took place at the end of May saw accords established with each of the communities on the process for future deliberation. That was part of what we were trying to achieve—establish a respectful relationship, so that when we dealt with education and health we would have the framework within which to do that. That was much celebrated. I remember the moment very well.

I'll continue to answer perhaps later.

● (1040)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Scott.

The chair's going to take the privilege of asking a question, if you don't mind, committee.

Mr. Martin, I've said this before at this committee that leadership is knowing when talk stops and when the work begins. My concern is that I feel our government is being ridiculed because we don't necessarily embrace the figures, the amounts of the accord, but we have embraced the priorities that were set out. We started to do the work, we stopped talking. We're moving on housing. We're moving on water quality infrastructure for first nations communities.

My question to you, Mr. Martin, is this: where is the plan to implement the priorities set out by the accord?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Chairman, the plan is set throughout the accord. It set objectives.

Let me give you an example in one area. It said they wanted to have, quite specifically, 22,000 more high school graduates within the next five years and they wanted to eliminate the gap between aboriginals and non-aboriginals in 10 years, which is 110,000 students. They said they wanted 14,900—I think it was close to 15,000—at the end of five years.

The Chair: Mr. Martin, the question is not that it isn't a good priority; the question is, how were you going to do that?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: What it said was—and that's where the transformative change agreement within British Columbia, which was to be the model for the rest of the country, came in. It said each province is going to have to operate this differently because each province is in charge of education. For instance, you were seeing on-reserve education under the control of the band, but following the provincial curriculum. What was set out was how we were going to achieve that target province by province, community by community. That had to be worked out. Because we didn't want to waste any more time, at the suggestion of the provinces, we were going to measure this every two to three years, not every five years, as had been originally established.

So Mr. Chairman, Kelowna announced the targets. We don't believe the federal government can impose the way of arriving at those targets on communities or on the provincial governments. All three have to work together, province by province, community by community, to achieve them. That's what Kelowna does.

The Chair: Are you aware that the Government of Canada signed an agreement with the Province of British Columbia and the first nations leadership in British Columbia to do just that, to put forward the framework for education?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Yes, I am.

The Chair: To me that's getting the work done, and that's what I'm trying to point out. Our government is getting the work done. We implemented it. We went forward. The criticism is that we're not following through with those priorities as set out, and that is not true. We are following those priorities, specifically in housing, specifically in water quality, infrastructure needs, and education. There is no criticism that there isn't work being done on the ground level.

● (1045)

Right Hon. Paul Martin: With respect, Mr. Chairman, we are delighted to see the government carrying through on projects we created or we signed. The fact is that that is one. You have to do this; this has to be magnified 10 times and in three territories.

The second thing is that there has been no money allocated by the government. I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, you cannot improve health care or education, you can't improve housing or provide clean water unless the money is made available. You can't do it by simply snapping your fingers. The government has refused to make the money available to implement the accord. That's what this is all about, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Did you review our last budget?

Mr. Blaney, I'll let you ask for the second part of this five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This morning, we indeed spoke more about what divides us than what unites us, but I think we all share the same principles, and that we all want to see an improvement in living conditions for Aboriginal peoples. I think that Ms. Karetak-Lindell has highlighted the constructive work that is being done within the community, and I can assure the members of the committee this morning that we intend to continue, because the next priority is housing, and that is also one of the minister's priorities.

Mr. Lemay, as you know, there was an agreement for and by the first nations with respect to education in Mashteuiatsh. You know that we are very seriously interested in education.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Has anything been signed?

Mr. Steven Blaney: Yes, a memorandum has been signed, Mr. Lemay. And that is what we need to remember from this morning. We agree on the principles, and we are working through the agenda that was established to improve living conditions for the first nations.

Mr. Martin, you made significant efforts from the governance standpoint, but that is not an aspect that came out of the Kelowna Accord. How do you think, as a committee or as a government, the governance and autonomy of the first nations could be improved, please?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: First of all, there is no doubt that governance is absolutely crucial. We are not the only people to say so, and the Aboriginal leaders have said so themselves. That is why, for example, the first nations will appoint an auditor general to serve them directly. I think that governance is transparency, and one of the factors that we included in the Kelowna Accord was transparency, in addition to the ability to measure outcomes. This, to me, is absolutely crucial. Governance means honesty, transparency and structures, but it also means achieving objectives. It is a basic philosophy, and I think all of the factors need to be combined together. We certainly endorse efforts to achieve governance, but we need to go much farther: Governance for what purpose?

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, we are moving on to Madame Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you.

Since this will be my last question, I would like to thank the chair now for attempting to keep some order here. I'd also like to thank our guests for coming and thank the people who are here listening to this important discussion.

I just need to correct a bit of information in terms of what the Conservative member said I indicated in my question. I did not say it was only the Liberal record for the past 13 years—although as a New Democrat, you know I'm very critical of the things that were not done over the last 13 years—but I did say that *both* the Conservative and Liberal governments over decades have failed to fulfill their commitments.

In terms of the tripartite agreement in British Columbia, on May 4, 2006, the First Nations Leadership Council from British Columbia wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, to Jim Flaherty, and to Jim Prentice, saying:

Your government has reneged on this historic multi-government agreement, and has proceeded to unilaterally implement its own plan to address our issues without any consultations with us....The funds announced in your budget will do very little to remedy chronic under-funding or the crushing poverty and appalling socio-economic conditions of First Nations communities.

I guess one of the things I would encourage this committee to do is actually invite the leadership council—I am talking about the three leadership groups in British Columbia—to come and talk to members about their understanding of the Kelowna accord, their understanding of its commitment, their understanding of how it was going to be implemented, and their understanding of where the gaps are.

As well, we also need to highlight some of the successes—like Membertou, like Patuanak, like Westbank—and build on those successes. Members of the committee have talked about this before.

The other plea we've heard from first nations, Métis, and Inuit leadership and community members is that we rise above partisan politics and come together as a government, as communities, and as first nations, Métis, and Inuit leadership to address these critical, serious issues.

I think I need to remind each and every one of us here that we are talking about people. My very first duty, when I was elected in 2004 was to attend a funeral on July 1 for a first nations youth who had hanged himself.

You started to talk about leadership but were interrupted, and I would like you to go back to the issue of leadership. I wonder why we cannot bring together a committee that includes first nations, Métis, and Inuit leadership and this committee to actually meaningfully move forward. We've had too many announcements and not enough action.

•(1050)

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I have just two comments, because I know time is running.

I believe the suggestion that has been made by Ms. Crowder in terms of bringing the aboriginal leadership to this committee and working together is a very positive one. It's essentially what we tried

to do at Kelowna. It's what was done at Mr. Scott's round tables. So I think the suggestion made by Ms. Crowder would be very valuable.

As we wind down here, I'd like to pick up on something else she just said. That is, we do talk a lot about...and with justification, because you can't go into some of these communities without seeing the tragedies that occur. But we don't talk enough about the successes; Ms. Crowder is absolutely right.

Mr. Chairman, there are some extraordinary successes out there in terms of entrepreneurship, in terms of bands that have come together to deal with their problems, in terms of the turnaround in education. When you see what band leadership can do when it really does take hold, it is extraordinary. That's why, I think, I'm so optimistic about the future.

So we ought to talk more about the successes. I'm very glad you brought that up.

The Chair: Going back over to the government side, who will speak?

Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to go back to some of the comments that were made on the consultations.

Which MPs were asked to be a part of the process? Were any opposition MPs asked? Mr. Martin, do you know the answer?

Hon. Andy Scott: Specifically, I was there. I remember that at Calgary the present minister Prentice was there. All MPs were invited.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Well, Mr. Martin, in fact the current minister was initially asked by Mr. Scott to take part in some of the round tables leading up to the first ministers meeting, but can you confirm that what he said is true? He said that various other members of your party, including Sue Barnes, demanded that this invitation be cancelled and it should only be a Liberal affair.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I can tell you, because I was the one who specifically invited Mr. Harper. Mr. Prentice came.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I'm talking about the round table leading up to the event.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Layton was invited and came, and Pat Martin was there.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I'm talking about the consultations.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: And Mr. Duceppe was there.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, clearly you're not answering—

Hon. Andy Scott: Just for the record, I think it's important, because you did ask. Mr. Prentice was there in Calgary.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Oh, he was in Calgary.

An hon. member: Kelowna.

Hon. Andy Scott: That was the round table.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Sorry, he was in Kelowna.

•(1055)

Hon. Andy Scott: No, Calgary. You asked about the round table.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: But you cancelled an invitation that was made to him, and clearly you're not prepared to answer that.

Hon. Andy Scott: Ask him this afternoon. He was in Calgary. I spoke to him.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I'd like to ask you about other groups that were involved. We had, for instance, ITK, CAP, and Aboriginal Friendship Centres before this committee, witnessing on various topics, but on this topic in particular. For instance, the individual from ITK who witnessed before our committee told us that he was not even told about the consultations until the weekend before the first ministers meeting of last year. Why weren't these parties included?

Hon. Andy Scott: I can tell you that Jose Kusugak, who was the president for the period in question, was at every round table meeting. He was engaged probably as much as any other Canadian. In fact, you should check the transcript from Kelowna to see what he had to say.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: That was not what he witnessed before this committee.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: I can tell you something else in terms of Jose. The fact is that not only was he there, but at the earlier meeting, when we announced the Inuit secretariat, Jose was there and the Inuit secretariat was part and parcel of all of this, at the specific request of the ITK.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Martin, during the last thirteen years, unfortunately we saw massive growth in the situation of poor water in first nations communities. In fact, one of your colleagues, Senator Grafstein, stated that he was told the government would bring in dynamic water policies to remedy the situation and that he should keep cool and await the new policy. Regretfully, that had not happened at all during the period leading up to Kelowna.

Why did you neglect the serious issues of water through your terms as both Minister of Finance and Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Paul Martin: First of all, we didn't. We did invest in water, as we invested in other areas.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Well, we sure inherited a massive problem, if you invested so much.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Chairman, if I could answer the question, if the question is whether we did enough, the answer is no. No, we didn't, and neither did previous governments. It's no excuse that we didn't do enough, but the fact is that it is no excuse now not to go ahead.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: And that's what we agree with. We must move forward.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: It's no excuse at this table, when all the parties in the House of Commons, and Canadians, and the aboriginal leadership want to proceed, to go ahead—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: And so does our government.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: —that in fact the government simply seems fixated on playing a partisan game.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: That's why we're proceeding—

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Now, let's deal with water.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: —with one of the largest budget investments in the last ten years.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Let's put ourselves in a situation in which, years from now, people aren't saying we didn't do enough about water, we didn't do enough about education.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Unfortunately, that is what they're going to be saying about your legacy.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: That's what Kelowna is all about.

The Chair: Order.

Actually, we're drawing close to the end of our time—

Hon. Anita Neville: I do have a—

The Chair: I know you have, but we don't have time for it.

Hon. Anita Neville: There are three minutes left, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: I just want to say that I really do appreciate the witnesses coming forward to this committee. I've said this before, and I want to say it again. The heart of every committee member here is to address the issues of first nations and aboriginal people, to make sure—

Hon. Anita Neville: Mr. Chairman, I have three minutes left.

The Chair: Madame Neville, I'm the chair of this meeting. We have to be out of here by 11 o'clock.

Hon. Anita Neville: And there are three minutes on the clock.

The Chair: There are two minutes on the clock, and I am wrapping this meeting up. It's going to take time for us to get out of here.

Our heart is that we wish to proceed and help first nations people. That's the heart of everyone here, and we're going to work to do that in the course of our service here.

I might say that we are having two other meetings to meet the leadership of the various aboriginal groups and to hear their report on the agreements that were discussed at Kelowna.

Thank you very much for your time.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Chairman, you have a difficult job. I think you're exercising it to the best of your ability, and I thank you very much.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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