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Chair

Mr. Bruce Stanton

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• (0900)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC)): Good morning.

[Translation]

This is the fourth meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

[English]

Today we have presentations, briefings, for the first hour from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development regarding the Indian residential schools section of the department.

Starting at 10 o'clock we'll be receiving a briefing on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We have two independent hours. We'll proceed through a first round for each.

We have with us this morning, for the first hour, Caroline Davis, assistant deputy minister for the resolution and individual affairs sector; Paul Vickery, who is acting director for policy; and Linda Barber, director general of policy and partnerships.

Ms. Davis will continue. We usually look to 10 minutes, followed by questions from members.

Ms. Caroline Davis (Assistant Deputy Minister, Resolution and Individual Affairs Sector, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you. Good morning.

I'd like to thank the chair and members of the committee for inviting us here today to talk about Indian residential schools and the work the government is doing to attempt to resolve the sad legacy the schools have left behind.

[Translation]

I would like to provide you a brief historical overview, and then describe the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

[English]

If I could correct the record, sir, I have Paul Vickery, who is senior general counsel of the Department of Justice; Linda Barber, who is director general of policy partnerships and communications; and Patricia Power, who is acting director of policy and strategic planning.

The three of us are with the resolution and individual affairs sector of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Paul is with the Department of Justice.

Following Confederation in 1867, the Government of Canada began to play a role in the development and administration of Indian residential schools. By the 1920s, the government had assumed control of the Indian residential schools operations, of which there were about 132 schools over time situated in seven out of 10 provinces and all three territories. In many cases the government operated the schools in partnership with religious organizations, and often employees of the government, including Indian agents and the RCMP, compelled attendance at the schools.

Aside from education, one of the stated intents of the Indian residential schools policy was to assimilate the children into the dominant culture. The policy resulted in over 150,000 children being removed from their homes and raised in isolation, away from the influence and comfort of their families, communities, traditions, and cultures. Conditions in the school were often quite harsh, and in some cases even abusive.

While most Indian residential schools ceased to operate by the mid-1970s, the last federally run school in Canada closed only in 1996.

On May 30, 2005, the Government of Canada appointed former Supreme Court Justice, the Honourable Frank Iacobucci, as the government's representative. His mandate was to lead discussions with legal counsel for former students, the Assembly of First Nations, and church entities toward a fair and lasting resolution of the legacy of Indian residential schools. These discussions culminated in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which was signed by all parties and approved by the government on May 10, 2006.

All nine jurisdictional courts approved the agreement, and it would become the largest class action settlement in Canadian history. The agreement includes five components.

• (0905)

[Translation]

First of all, the Common Experience Payment, known as the CEP, provides a lump sum payment for the general experience of being removed from family, community and their care. This payment increases incrementally in relation to the duration of time spent at the school. A trust fund of \$1.9 billion was established for the CEP.

[English]

The independent assessment process provides additional individual compensation for physical and sexual abuse under an alternative dispute resolution model. Awards range from \$5,000 to \$430,000.

Measures to support healing include a \$125 million endowment to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and a Health Canada support program of \$95 million over five years, which offers counselling and emotional support.

Twenty million dollars will be used to fund commemoration initiatives.

The last major component is the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with a budget of \$60 million.

I'll talk briefly about progress to date.

Implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement commenced on September 19, 2007.

In collaboration with Service Canada, 97,000 applications for common experience payments have been received for review by our office. Seventy-two thousand have been approved for payment, and cheques have been sent out amounting to \$1.48 billion, which is an average of \$20,500 per claimant. We have an extensive research team with access to a computer-assisted research system. They prepare careful decisions on each individual application.

To date, 20,000 people have been found to be ineligible, either because their school is not on the agreed upon list, because they were day school students, or because we were unable to find records of their attendance.

The government is making every effort to ensure former students receive the compensation for which they are eligible, including a reconsideration process. Twenty-two thousand people have applied for reconsideration, and we have completed 9,000 reviews. Assessment of applications is intended to confirm eligibility, not to reduce it.

In addition, applicants can appeal directly to the national administration committee in the event that their request for reconsideration has been denied, in whole or in part. The national administration committee oversees the implementation of the agreement on behalf of the courts. There have been 1,100 appeals made to date.

[Translation]

Recognizing the impact that the agreement would have, the Government of Canada established the Community Impacts Working Group in early 2006. The community coordinates and informs aboriginal communities and former students about the individual and collective elements of the agreement. We are planning the next meeting to take place in March.

[English]

A national Indian residential schools crisis line has been set up to provide support for former residential school students. The crisis line is staffed by trained counsellors who are available to answer calls

from former students and their families, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The phone number for the crisis line is 1-866-925-4419.

Should former students or their family members require additional support, they are referred to Health Canada's Indian residential schools resolution health support program, which was developed to support former students and their families through the implementation of the agreement.

At implementation date, the agreement included an agreed upon list of 130 institutions. All decisions on requests for the addition of institutions to the schools list are guided by article 12 of the agreement.

The criteria for adding an institution to the list are: (a) the child was placed in a residence away from the family home by or under the authority of Canada for the purposes of education; and (b) Canada was jointly or solely responsible for the operation of the residence and care of the children resident there.

To date, the department has received over 8,500 requests to add approximately 1,250 institutions to the agreement. Two schools have been added to the list. We continue to process approximately 15 requests per month.

A word about the apology.

● (0910)

[Translation]

On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, rose in the House of Commons and issued a full apology to former students of Indian residential schools. This was followed by an apology from each of the leaders of opposition.

[English]

Present on the floor of the House were the leaders of the national aboriginal organizations, who also addressed the House in acceptance of the apology. The event was transmitted to a crowd of several thousand who gathered on Parliament Hill and was broadcast across the nation. Survivors of the residential schools watched with anticipation from coast to coast to coast.

The apology garnered international attention. In November 2008 Canada was given an award in Washington, D.C., for the apology by Search for Common Ground, an internationally renowned organization respected for working with local partners to address conflicts constructively.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC, is the cornerstone of the agreement. The commission will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between aboriginal people and other Canadians. As you most likely know, the TRC has experienced some challenges with the resignation of its chairman and the resignation of two commissioners, which will be effective on June 1, 2009.

The enlistment of Justice Frank Iacobucci to oversee the selection of the new commissioners gives us confidence that the process will be under way soon for the sake of survivors and their families. In the interim, the secretariat has continued to lay the groundwork for the seven national events that are part of the settlement agreement.

Canada has supported this establishment of the TRC. I would like to stress, however, that the assistance Canada has provided to the TRC is strictly related to the operational and administrative set-up. We will continue to be available to the TRC in this regard. The Government of Canada has ensured that the TRC can conduct its important work with complete autonomy.

Getting under way sooner rather than later is indeed critical to regaining the trust and confidence of the survivors, their families, and communities. As I'm certain you can appreciate, they have been waiting for some time to have their opportunity to speak to their individual and collective experiences. Of equal importance, we believe that Canada has also waited for a long time to hear this part of our collective history.

We have high hopes for the TRC and its role in fulfilling the renewal of the relationship with aboriginal people in Canada. Thank you.

The Chair: Merci, Ms. Davis.

[*Translation*]

We will now move to questions from members.

Mr. Russell.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Good morning, Ms. Davis and our other witnesses. We thank you for coming here and sharing this briefing with us. Of course, you and I and all Canadians know how important this particular file is for individuals, their families, and their communities.

I want to pick up on a couple of points. First is the addition of schools. There were many people who felt left out of the initial agreement. Many of them have expressed this to me personally and have shared their stories of hurt and pain, and of wanting to reconcile as well, individually and collectively.

You say you've added two schools. Can you tell us which two schools those are?

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes, I can. St. Paul's Hostel in the Yukon and Anahim Lake Dormitory in B.C. were the two that were added.

Mr. Todd Russell: Okay. As you know, there have been a number of requests from Labrador to add maybe three or four institutions. They have all been rejected based on the criteria set out in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, or that is the assumption.

In the last campaign the Conservative government said,

A re-elected Conservative Government will also commit to pursuing bilateral agreements with provinces to address the wrongs of the residential schools era for Aboriginals attending similar schools not covered by the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

They were re-elected, unfortunately.

Has this direction gone to the department? Has the department taken up any of that type of process at all?

• (0915)

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes, the minister has begun discussions with some of his colleagues. I've heard very brief reports back from those discussions, and they will be continuing. I would perhaps add that

the government has signed a protocol with the Métis, which also has this as a subject for discussion between the Métis and the government.

Mr. Todd Russell: Yes, because Île-à-la-Crosse was one of those schools that were given a formal commitment, but it still hasn't been added to the list, as I understand it.

Ms. Caroline Davis: That's right.

Mr. Todd Russell: Can you tell me if the minister has had any discussions with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Ms. Caroline Davis: I'm not aware of that, sir, I'm sorry. We can get the answer on that to you.

Mr. Todd Russell: I'd appreciate that.

I also want to pick up on the matter of the apology, the reconciliation. We kick that word around a lot, and different people have different concepts of what reconciliation means. Certainly the TRC is going to form a vital part of that for people in their own individual contexts, but let's talk about reconciliation in a really substantive and formative way.

Has the department made any fundamental changes in terms of its approaches, legislative or policy, to give some substance to the apology? It's one thing to have the apology, to have it accepted, and it was an historic event, but are we doing something beyond the apology, outside of just the TRC? Is the department undertaking any substantive actions internally to address how they do business with aboriginal people?

Ms. Caroline Davis: The department has a couple of things in play. One is that we had a reorganization this summer, and a sector has been given responsibility for developing partnerships with aboriginal people.

I think the record would speak for itself in that we do continue to deliver real, measurable, and tangible results for aboriginal people. We're moving forward on a number of key initiatives, including housing—that was included in the budget tabled recently—water quality, education, and child and family services. We have also moved forward on settling specific claims and delivering protection for on-reserve human rights.

I do believe reconciliation is at the heart of the methods we're using to move forward.

Mr. Todd Russell: I want to use the specific example of MRP, matrimonial real property. If we're talking about a formative change and about the duty to consult, wouldn't it be incumbent upon the government to sit down in a real consultative way prior to the drafting of the legislation that affects individual and collective rights, in this case on reserve, as it did with the Specific Claims Tribunal Act? And wouldn't that be a tangible move to a different way of doing business with aboriginal people?

I just use that as an example. There could be other examples out there.

Ms. Caroline Davis: The matrimonial real property legislation does address a very difficult gap that exists between the rights that people have living off reserve and the ones on reserve with regard to marital and relationship breakdowns. The government regards this as a very serious issue. They've reintroduced the legislation just recently.

There was a lot of consultation. There was a group discussion led by a first nations person in the run-up to the preparation of the legislation. I think the reintroduction does underline the government's commitment to resolving this.

Mr. Todd Russell: Well, I would argue that, seeing that the groups and individuals I've met with...and I don't want to move off too much in that direction, but they have substantive issues with that particular piece of legislation. They argue that the government hasn't been consultative when it comes to development of that piece of legislation.

The Chair: Mr. Russell, we should try to keep it on topic here. We have officials here from the resolutions section. I'm prepared to give a wide berth here in terms of discussion, but we do need to keep it on topic as well.

Mr. Todd Russell: I'm taking a wide berth, but don't take up my time, please, Mr. Chair.

• (0920)

The Chair: Of course not.

Mr. Todd Russell: In terms of the independent assessment process, where are we with regard to the number of claimants, the number of claims that have been resolved and the number that remain outstanding?

Ms. Caroline Davis: By the middle of January we'd received 9,361 claims. The number of decisions rendered is 1,503. So far, sir, if you're interested, the compensation awarded is about \$94 million.

Mr. Todd Russell: Proportionately, of course, the common experience payments are probably much easier to deal with. But these claims—physical and sexual abuse and things of that nature—are much more complex.

Do you feel good about the process, about the speed of the settlement of these claims, or do you feel that more needs to be done? It seems that only a small portion of them have been settled.

Ms. Caroline Davis: If I could perhaps add, and I don't think I made this clear in my notes at the beginning, the independent assessment process is run separately from myself. I'm not responsible for it. The gentleman who runs it reports directly to the deputy minister.

But I have been speaking with him because clearly we are very much involved in the process, in that the research that Canada presents to this adjudication process is key to the determination. So we are looking at ways to make the process more efficient, to try to find ways to have the hearings run in a more effective way that responds to the needs of survivors and to make sure we speed up the presentation of our information.

My colleague has told me that he is gearing up to increase the number of hearings that are going to be happening each month as we go into next month and the following fiscal year. So I hope you will see improvements in that.

Mr. Todd Russell: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We are out of time. I allowed you a bit of extra time there, Mr. Russell, just to finish up.

[*Translation*]

We will continue with Mr. Lévesque.

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): I will be sharing my time with my colleague Marc.

Ms. Davis, could you tell us, after the apology by the Prime Minister, how did the commission change its way of proceeding with settlements?

[*English*]

Ms. Caroline Davis: We regarded the apology as being very key to the moving forward of all our operations. We do take it very seriously in everything we do.

I think reconciliation operates at very many different levels. It operates at a societal level in the sense of the relations between the rest of Canada and aboriginal people, but where we're more concerned is the relations between the survivors that we are trying to assist and to provide the payments to and ourselves, and the amount of support that is available to them.

I mentioned the crisis line. We have survivors who are in quite fragile mental states. The process of reconciliation for them does involve health counselling to attempt to get at the causes of their mental fragility in terms of the abuse they suffered when they were young. Health Canada has a network of regional health support workers who go into communities to work with individual people and communities. So I think reconciliation is at the heart of that work that we're doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: Actually, we have heard that in the case of certain kinds of treatments, money was deducted from the payments for this care. How do you intend to correct this problem?

[*English*]

Ms. Caroline Davis: The emphasis we put in the first set of operations on the common experience payment was to get the payments moving as quickly as we could. We'll go back and, for instance, find people who had claimed for maybe seven or eight years but we had records only for five. We'll do a reconsideration process that will give them the benefit of the doubt, and if we've lost records, that really is not their fault, it's ours, so we will be trying to respond to the needs in that way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: We know that some people are much older than others, and that some are very ill. Have any specific measures been taken to find them as quickly as possible?

[*English*]

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes, very definitely. I mentioned the health support workers. We try to make sure that we are responding quickly in cases where people fall ill and are in desperate need of the payments. So we do try to provide some care at that level as well.

• (0925)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: Thank you, Ms. Davis.

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): How much time is left?

[English]

The Chair: Four minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Fine.

Ms. Davis, I have a question.

There was a boarding school in my riding, in Saint-Marc. At the time, Saint-Marc was a very small community, a small village. Here is my question: Why are the day students not eligible for this program? I am speaking about Saint-Marc, where it really was a special situation, but it was common in several communities. Many natives left their reserves in the morning, which was 12 kilometres away, went to Saint-Marc and went back late in the evening when the parents or someone else would come and get them. They experienced things and they would be entitled to file a claim in at least two cases, because at least two people came to consult me on this matter in my office. I promised to ask the question. Can you give me an answer? Is this situation provided for in the legislation? I did not see it. Perhaps I misread the act. Does the act specifically exclude day students?

[English]

Ms. Caroline Davis: The agreement is the other way around. It specifically includes people who stayed at residential schools, who boarded at the schools. The common experience payment goes to the people who were really taken from their families, who couldn't go home in the evening and as a result suffered greatly.

We have not made provision for people who were at day schools.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Twenty thousand people were excluded, yet several hundred were able to go home in the evening. The parties must take another look at this agreement. These people experienced things. The image that comes to mind is that they would go back home late in the evening. During the day, and particularly after school, things would happen between the time when the parents came to get them and the time they went back home. Is there any way of making some exception? Will we have to find a way of looking at that? I am talking about unusual cases that are documented. These people really were at this boarding school, but they could not sleep there because the reserve where they lived was 12 kilometres away.

[English]

Ms. Caroline Davis: I'll ask Mr. Vickery if he can assist with this question.

Mr. Paul Vickery (Director and Senior General Counsel, Department of Justice): I think during the course of the negotiation of the agreement, the issue of day students was specifically addressed. All of the parties around the table during the negotiations led by the Honourable Frank Iacobucci had the opportunity of

raising questions in relation to whether particular groups of students should be included.

No agreement, of course, is necessarily perfect. The discussion that led to the agreement was focused on dealing with the common experience of those who were taken from their families and compelled to live in an institutional setting. That was the thrust of the agreement, and that is why the key criterion for compensation under the common experience payment is that the individual has undergone the common experience of an institutionalized setting in which that person lived.

Under the independent assessment process, if there are claims of abuse of either a physical or sexual nature, then a day student would, of course, be eligible for that process.

The Chair: That is all the time.

Now let's go to Ms. Crowder for seven minutes.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming before the committee today.

I just want to follow up on the day student question. In some cases, some students were actually put into foster homes because there were actually no 24-hour beds available in residential schools. They attended residential schools as day students but were returned to the foster care homes.

So, in effect, they were removed from their homes and often placed in culturally inappropriate homes. Why are they not considered in this process?

Ms. Caroline Davis: Again, they can make an appeal to the national administration committee, which does include representatives of survivors in the churches. That issue could be discussed there.

• (0930)

Ms. Jean Crowder: It's not being reconsidered, though, in terms of this particular common experience payment?

Ms. Caroline Davis: No, it's not part of the terms we're seeking.

Ms. Jean Crowder: You've indicated that 20,000 people are ineligible and that so far 9,000 have completed reviews. We've had many complaints about the length of the reviews. In fact I have a case here. The request was received by the CEP in April 2008. That person received a letter dated June 26, 2008. As of yesterday, they had inquired about the application still in process and were advised that no timeframe had been set for reconsiderations. We were just asked to check back periodically.

These are often elderly claimants, and you're asking them to go through a reconsideration process that has to date taken almost a year. What timeframes are in place, particularly when you're talking about 9,000 reviews?

Ms. Caroline Davis: We are putting a focus on this now. Having gone through the first round of the common experience payments, we are now devoting resources for research to the second and third stages.

I hope we will see an increase in the speed at which we're dealing with reconsiderations.

I would add that if there is somebody in particular who you feel needs to have a quick resolution to their claim because of the state of their health or their age, you could certainly let me know that.

Ms. Jean Crowder: We would contact you directly?

Ms. Caroline Davis: You could indeed contact me directly.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Is the department planning to put in place speed-of-service guidelines for processing the reviews? Many of the departments, for example, HRSDC, have guidelines in place for processing appeals.

Ms. Caroline Davis: We do try to aim towards a 60-day turnaround on reconsideration. Then if there's further information that the claimant needs to provide us, there are 100 days for that.

Ms. Jean Crowder: You're saying 60 days, so in this particular case I'm talking about—

Ms. Caroline Davis: It has well exceeded that already.

Ms. Jean Crowder: And we do have numbers of cases that are in that—

Ms. Caroline Davis: Perhaps you could, as I said, pass me the list.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Just in that light, is there an MP contact for when we have questions concerning CEP?

Ms. Caroline Davis: There is the CEP line, which is a service line.

Ms. Jean Crowder: But is there an MP contact?

Ms. Caroline Davis: We haven't set that up specifically. If it's the wish of the committee, we could certainly look at that. In the meantime, I would suggest you give my office a call.

Ms. Jean Crowder: In terms of the schools, you've indicated that two schools have been accepted under the agreement. Is there a possibility of providing us with a list of all the schools that have applied for reconsideration?

Ms. Caroline Davis: We do have one here with us that we could leave with the committee. It's the original list. We could also provide one that's been updated to reflect the additional two. The information is on the Internet as well.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Is it the list of all the schools that have applied? Okay. We can access it on the Internet.

Ms. Caroline Davis: The list on the website has been updated as far as November 14, 2008. When we go back, we'll make sure it's up to date today.

Ms. Jean Crowder: When you have 1,200 schools, what's the process for looking at adding those schools or denying those schools? You've outlined the three criteria. Are those the only criteria that are used?

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes, they are. We do have a lot of research that was actually done before the government entered into the agreement. There is a lot of research available on a large number of schools. We can go through that. We discuss carefully and apply the two-part test before we take the decisions.

Then, when a decision is made, there is a detailed explanation of the documents that we've looked at and the kinds of things that we read in the documents that support the decision. We make that available to the people who've applied.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Any appeal process for the school?

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes, the appeal for a school could come from the claimant themselves, who could go to the court, or else the national administrative committee could take the case and go to court.

Ms. Jean Crowder: In terms of the IAP process, we've heard from quite a number of people that, in their view, their claims are rejected for seemingly minor reasons. For example, we've had some people say that they couldn't remember the name of the teacher who abused them when they were six years old, and that was the reason their claim was rejected. They're now in their sixties and seventies. It's not unreasonable, I think, that they couldn't remember the name of the teacher they had at age six.

What kinds of reasons are we seeing for the rejections of those claims? I mean, that seems a fairly simple reason.

● (0935)

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes, it does. Again, speaking for my colleague, a very thorough research process goes on.

I think, with all due respect, the people who go to these hearings are very often, as I've mentioned already, in a fragile mental state—

Ms. Jean Crowder: Well, they're traumatized, and then they're traumatized all over again.

Ms. Caroline Davis: They're traumatized, and they get traumatized all over again. Their recollection of the process they go through, and the kinds of reasons we give, could be difficult for them to take in.

Again, it's very important that if you hear about one of these, you encourage them to work with their health support worker to try to work through this.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I don't know what the accessibility is in many remote communities to health support workers. When I hear about a crisis line, the reality is that many communities simply don't have telephones. So providing them with the option of a crisis line to deal with not only their own trauma but also intergenerational trauma is....

I mean, a crisis line in many ways simply is not culturally appropriate. It doesn't provide support on the ground in the community. So if that's what's being offered to people—

The Chair: You're out of time, Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: —I just hope the department will look at some other options.

The Chair: Okay, we'll leave it at that. Thank you.

We'll proceed to Mr. Rickford,

I understand you'll be splitting your time with Mr. Albrecht—or whatever you choose to do; please go ahead.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming here today. It's nice to see some familiar faces.

I have two questions. One deals with the Indian residential school process. The other one is just a comment on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a sort of pre-emptive comment on what we'll be hearing later on today.

First, was there any exercise or initiative to prepare or respond to or provide support for folks who got payments, either through common experience or the IAP—for example, to safeguard against certain kinds of exploitation and so on? Was there anything done in that regard?

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes, there was. The community impacts working group did discuss, as you said, the possibilities of adverse impacts.

For instance, we worked with band administrators to make sure that information was available on how to make a will, how to manage an estate, because for the first time people would have substantial amounts of money to leave, potentially.

We are going to be reinvigorating this community impacts working group because there have been some stories in the press recently that have been disturbing. We would like to try to, again, as far as we can, work with communities to prevent those kinds of things.

Mr. Greg Rickford: I think it's critical, so I appreciate that response.

There's a second piece I want to go over. I understand that in order for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to have any success, it has to act autonomously from the department. But I also understand that the department provided some services in kind. I think you mentioned the operational administrative set-up of the TRC.

Could you comment on what those operational administrative things were? As well, can you briefly comment, if you will, on the role of the church or churches, and whether any deference was given to the traditional element of this in helping administer the TRC?

Ms. Caroline Davis: I can comment from the point of view of the government, perhaps not so much from the point of view of the churches.

Government has, as you know, certain accountability requirements that have to be met. My colleague who'll be before you in a few minutes is the acting executive director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We have been supporting her as far as we possibly can, in terms of providing systems and qualified people who can administer government programs, experts in finance program management, that kind of thing. The aim of all that has been to ensure that they can meet the requirements of the Financial Administration Act.

For the churches, I don't think I can really add anything there, sorry. It will be really for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to get up and running and find the support that it needs where it can find it.

• (0940)

Mr. Greg Rickford: Okay.

The Chair: We're going to go to Mr. Clarke.

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): I'm very interested in this. My mother, my grandparents, aunts, and uncles all attended residential school, so it is very dear to me. We look at the residential schools as being negative, but there were good times also in the schools, from what I was told by my elders. They got an education. I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for an education.

The question I have, and forgive me if I'm not clear, is that in order for the students and the children to go, there's some wording in the agreement on parenting and the residential schools. Do you by chance have that wording with regard to the criteria for the schools to be acting as a parent?

A voice: Parental relationship.

Mr. Rob Clarke: Yes, sorry, parental relationship.

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes. I referred to it in my speech. Would you like me to run through that again?

Mr. Rob Clarke: Under section 12. It's the parental role. This has a really big impact for schools and being selected.

Ms. Caroline Davis: Yes.

It reflects the fact that at a residential school children are in the care of members of the religious order that runs it, or the teachers that run it, as opposed to their parents. The intergenerational impacts of that, of course, are quite severe, in that when children grow up in a loving and kindly atmosphere, they tend to treat their own children that way. It's the loss of parenting skills that came from attendance at residential schools that we've been trying to address.

Mr. Rob Clarke: When the students were in the residential school, the schools were a parent. Is that correct? Did they have a parenting role?

Ms. Caroline Davis: They were *in loco parentis*, yes.

Mr. Rob Clarke: How is the language selected—

Ms. Caroline Davis: The language in the school?

Mr. Rob Clarke: —and as interpreted now?

Ms. Caroline Davis: Well, the language of the agreement was negotiated between the parties.

Do you want to comment on this, Paul?

Mr. Paul Vickery: Yes. Certainly the specific language of the settlement agreement was the subject of extensive discussion over quite an extended period of time. There was a variety of viewpoints put forward. The ultimate language was arrived at by consensus.

The Chair: You've still got 20 seconds. If you wanted to have a quick one, that would be fine.

Mr. Rob Clarke: Is that language with Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada through interpretation, case by case?

Ms. Caroline Davis: We certainly work within the terms of the agreement but, as I said, to try to put the benefit of the doubt in favour of the applicants.

Mr. Rob Clarke: The article there is based on interpretation.

Ms. Caroline Davis: Well, there is interpretation and there's a growing interpretation as we go through the appeals. The information that we're getting from that will be precedential.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I appreciate the members sticking to the timelines tightly. We're dealing with a tight timeline here. That's a lead-in that in our next round we're going to try to keep to three minutes, if we can. We've got 15 minutes left with the officials here on this particular subject.

Let's proceed to Madame Folco for three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

If there is any time left over, I would like to share it with my colleague Mr. Russell.

First of all, Ms. Davis, I must apologize for arriving late, but that in no way diminishes the importance of this issue.

Concerning the commission, we can assume that it is important for the commission to be entirely independent of the government, regardless of which party forms the government. I don't need an answer to that. The answer seems pretty obvious. If the answer is yes, what has been done to ensure that the secretariat and the commissioners are not subject to any kind of government interference?

I have a second question for you. I'm sorry I'm speaking so quickly, but I have only three minutes.

What protective measures have been taken to ensure that the evaluation process is free from any government interference?

• (0945)

[*English*]

Ms. Caroline Davis: With regard to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I could perhaps refer to the supplementary estimates that were tabled at committee. What they did was quite unusual in government terms. They have allocated the budget for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the five years that it will be operating as an entire amount. Usually, for instance, a five-year program would be divided into five parts in the estimates. The money that's been approved for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be rolling over from year to year, and the government has given approval for the rollover. So I would argue that the budgetary restraint on it is considerably less than it would be for somebody like myself.

With regard to the independent assessment process on abuse cases, which I believe is what you were referring to, the adjudicators are selected and are independent of government, so the process of reviewing with individual claimants acts outside of public service employees. We only get involved when the claim has been decided and it becomes a question of payment. So that process is independent.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: The other questions are for my colleague.

Mr. Todd Russell: I want to go back to the independent assessment process. You said there were 9,361 claims received. How many do you anticipate receiving, or does the government have a number? There are some reports as high as 14,000 to 18,000 potential claims. Was there a projection when the agreement was done up of how many claims they would receive?

Ms. Caroline Davis: We're estimating at about 12,000. Obviously, as history continues, that estimate is quite soft.

Mr. Todd Russell: So it could go much higher.

Ms. Caroline Davis: It could do, yes.

The Chair: That's it, unfortunately, Mr. Russell. Thank you very much, and to Madame Folco.

We're going to Mr. Albrecht for three minutes.

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

I just want to say how important it was to me, having been present the day the apology was delivered, and also on that day having the opportunity to speak to many of the residential school survivors and to feel the sense of hope for renewed relationships. I think that's significant. I hope we don't lose sight of the big picture in all of this. I think today we're struggling with some of the logistics of getting the hard work done now.

I certainly want to follow up on the concerns that Mr. Rickford mentioned earlier of trying to mitigate the risks of having this money become actually a negative in the lives of anyone, aboriginal or non-aboriginal. I'm glad to hear that you indicated there are some measures in place to help that.

I had one question. You said the average common experience payment is \$20,500, and then the independent assessment process ranges from \$5,000 to \$430,000. Would that be in addition to the common experience or would that be separate?

Ms. Caroline Davis: That's an addition. It's in cases of specific abuse. The common experience payment went to everyone who was at a residential school, and as I said, only some of them actually suffered specific cases of sexual or physical abuse.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

Would you be able to just flush out a little for us...? On page 4 of your comments you outlined a number of the initiatives that are in place to help aboriginal people, such as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. We obviously later will want to talk about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The \$125 million endowment to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the Health Canada support program of \$95 million over five years are significant investments. Could you maybe just give us a bird's-eye view of how that money will be allocated and what different programs are in place within those foundations to get that work done? I know that's a big question.

Ms. Caroline Davis: It's difficult to speak for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation because it is an independent one. It has prepared a number of volumes of summaries of impacts that the residential school system had that I feel form part of a very important historical record. It is also working with communities on individual projects to promote healing. It might be interesting for you to read its annual report.

• (0950)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I have looked at it in previous years. I haven't recently. I guess the question I'm trying to get at, if I have another three seconds, is if any of its work is preventative in nature, especially considering this new layer that's been placed onto all of us now with the common experience payment and the independent assessment program.

Ms. Caroline Davis: I'm not sure I can specifically answer on behalf of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, but if I could, we do have a program that provides public information to communities and works with them on the impacts. We will be carrying forward funding for that into the next fiscal year, so there would be some scope for working with communities to try to mitigate some of these potential impacts.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albrecht. Now we'll go to the Bloc.

Mr. Lemay, three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Ms. Davis, one thing seems essential to me. I was looking for it in your opening remarks, but I will say it in my own words.

In your introduction, one must not lose sight—and I assure you that none of the members here have any political designs with regard to this issue—of the fact that the money absolutely must be paid to the aboriginals. I think that your mandate is clear. In my opinion, it is very important to remind you of this. I think that I don't even need to remind you, you appear to be a very sensible person. Everything must be done so that the aboriginals receive what they are entitled to. Many people in my riding experienced horrible things in the boarding school and it will never be possible to help them and turn them back into the people they were before, but at least we should help them by making sure that the financial compensation is paid to them.

We know that the religious communities will be paying out \$100 million. How are you going to ensure that this amount, \$100 million or more, which is specified in the Departmental Performance Report for the period ending March 31, will be paid out and will go to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation?

[*English*]

Ms. Caroline Davis: You're referring to the money that the church is providing in services in kind. We will be doing an evaluation of the whole settlement agreement, and we are in discussions with the church groups continually. I think we can give you some assurance that indeed the church groups regard this with the amount of seriousness that you do and that we all do, in fact. So I'm very hopeful on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: The Aboriginal Healing Foundation is extremely important in this entire process. Is it doing well? Is it operating well? Is the \$125 million paid out helping aboriginal people overcome these traumatic events?

[*English*]

Ms. Caroline Davis: Certainly. From what I've read in its annual reports and the documents that it has sent out, I would say that it's been a very positive influence in this area.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lemay, you still have thirty seconds if you wish.

Mr. Marc Lemay: I'm going to give that time to Madame or Monsieur

[*Translation*]

As long as they are not using it for political purposes.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Duncan.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Merci, Monsieur Lemay.

I have residential schools in my area—or had—and family members who were in residential schools. The apology cannot be underestimated. I've seen the impact it's had on individuals, on those who wouldn't speak about their experience with their own family members until such time as that apology kind of broke things open. We have individuals who actually talk about the good experience they had in the school. They could have been with a brother or sister in the very same school who had exactly the opposite experience. This has been a very emotional time for many people, but it has been good in that it's brought process to the exercise, and I think it's brought families back together that were driven apart.

I would like to ask a little more on the Health Canada support program of \$95 million over five years. I realize we don't have Health Canada here, but do you have any idea what the expectation is that the money would be used for?

We had the comment from Jean Crowder of the NDP that the crisis line doesn't always work. I'm quite sure she's correct on that matter, but there are other provisions that you have referenced in your talk.

• (0955)

Ms. Caroline Davis: Perhaps I could mention this from my own personal point of view. I was in Edmonton yesterday and happened to cross a meeting between the director of the Alberta regional health support workers and her workers. The majority of the workers are aboriginal themselves, so they're able to provide a culturally appropriate service. They do indeed work directly in the communities. They provide counselling, and they work with the elders so that the elders can provide further support. They also provide transportation to counselling sessions or work with people who are in need of further counselling to deal with their traumas.

I am extremely impressed having met with these people. There were about 25 of them there. I was very impressed with their level of dedication and indeed their ability to deal with people who might be suicidal or who might in fact be threatening violence against other people.

I do believe the work they're doing is bearing fruit and is going to aid the survivors and the communities.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Members, we are out of time if we're going to switch over to the next topic. I thank you for your indulgence and patience with the smaller room here today as well.

Madam Davis, we appreciate your presentation this morning.

We'll take a brief two-minute break while we switch over, and then we'll proceed with the next subject.

Thank you.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1000)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to resume committee business. The second item on the agenda is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

[*English*]

I welcome Madam Aideen Nabigon.

We're going to begin with your presentation for 10 minutes. In the course of that, you can introduce the guests who are with us today. We'll proceed from there and then to questions from members after your presentation.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon (Acting Executive Director, Truth and Reconciliation Commission): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for this opportunity to appear before your committee to discuss the work of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

With me here today I have Alia Butt, who is the acting director of policy, and Matt Garrow, the acting director of corporate services.

I've been the acting executive director of the Truth and Reconciliation Secretariat since September 2008. The secretariat is a new government department that supports the work of the commission. The commission, which is comprised of a chair and two commissioners appointed by order in council, is independent. The executive director reports to the commission on mandated activities and to the minister for the purpose of reporting to Parliament on how the TRC has spent the money allocated to it under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

By way of background, I've spent my public service career dedicated to aboriginal issues, and in recent years I've been actively involved in Indian residential schools issues for three separate government departments.

I'd like to provide an overview of the TRC, including the work of the commission since it was established on June 1, 2008, and the work it will undertake over the course of its five-year mandate.

The TRC is one component of the court-approved settlement agreement. Pursuant to the agreement, \$60 million was allocated for the creation of the TRC. The commission is said to be the cornerstone of the settlement agreement.

Canada's TRC is unique from other commissions around the world in that its scope is primarily centred around the mistreatment of children. Its focus of research spans more than 100 years, one of

the longest durations ever examined. It is also the first court-ordered truth commission to be established. As such, the court plays an ongoing role in the implementation and supervision of the commission. Participation in all TRC activities is voluntary. The TRC process will be inclusive and open to all those who wish to participate. The commission is not a criminal tribunal and will therefore not hold hearings.

As set out in our mandate, the TRC will do the following: research and examine the conditions that gave rise to the Indian residential schools legacy; provide an opportunity for those affected, including first nations, Métis, and Inuit survivors, their families, communities, the churches and former school employees, the government, and the Canadian public to share their experiences about a significant part of Canadian history still unknown to most Canadians; create an accurate and public historical record of the past, and in doing so it will help to fill the blank pages of Canada's history; contribute to a process of truth, healing, and reconciliation; and be forward-looking and results-orientated in terms of rebuilding and renewing aboriginal relationships and the relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

At the end of our mandate we will have accomplished the following: we will have listened to those whose lives have been deeply affected by the legacy of residential schools; we will have held seven national events in different regions across Canada to promote awareness and public education about the Indian residential schools system and its impacts; we will have supported community events across the country and produced a public report that will include recommendations to the parties of the settlement agreement; we will have supported commemoration initiatives nationally for activities that honour Indian residential school survivors and pay tribute in a lasting manner; and we will have established a national research centre that will be a lasting resource about the Indian residential schools legacy.

In terms of the progress that has been made to date, I can advise that the TRC secretariat has been working to put in place the essential organizational structure to allow the secretariat to implement its various mandate activities, including the development and approval of a Treasury Board submission, the development of an organization chart, which has been submitted to the Public Service Commission for approval, and we've initiated processes to meet federal reporting obligations.

With respect to the TRC mandate, the secretariat has developed a strategic plan and we have developed implementation strategies and work plans. We've also identified legal issues impacting on the work of the TRC and obtained advice with respect to statement gathering, legal obligations under federal privacy legislation, and the collection and archiving of documents.

•(1005)

We need to gain back the trust of survivors and restore confidence in the process. Once the new commission has been appointed, we will be in a position to move forward to successfully implement our mandate. In spite of the challenges the commission has faced, we appreciate the patience and understanding of Canadians, particularly survivors of residential schools. We recognize that many survivors are elderly and that we need to move forward as quickly as possible to receive statements from anyone affected by the legacy of residential schools. People will be able to describe their experiences in a safe, respectful, and culturally appropriate manner. A person might share his or her story through a one-on-one interview, in a written statement, or in a group setting.

Over the course of the next few months, the secretariat will finalize frameworks for national and community events, finalize budget allocations for mandate activities, increase communications and outreach and continue dialogue with parties and survivor organizations, and conclude the selection process for members of the Indian residential schools survivor committee, which is a 10-member committee, the majority of whom will be survivors from across Canada, that will serve as an advisory body to the TRC and will ensure that the voices of survivors are heard and reflected when providing advice and recommendations to the commission. We'll hire regional liaisons, and we'll increase our capacity by staffing positions, with a particular priority on hiring aboriginal employees.

Our focus must be on what is important for survivors and all of Canada. Indian residential schools are a part of our shared history, a history that is not well understood by many. We need to educate Canadians as to why this history is important and what impacts are still being felt as a result of this legacy. That is why the TRC is relevant today and for future generations.

There has been international interest in the work of the TRC, and the Prime Minister's apology last June further increased its international profile. The TRC must facilitate a process of truth and healing and provide the foundation for reconciliation. We want to help guide and inspire aboriginal peoples and all Canadians toward a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Mr. Chair, I welcome the input of the members of the committee on ways that we can ensure the success of the TRC. Thank you.

•(1010)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to questions from members, beginning with Mr. Murphy.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses as well. I am a new member of this committee.

[English]

I have a few questions, a couple of them, Ms. Nabigon, you might not be able to or want to respond to, and they are these. We really don't know why the commissioners couldn't get along and why Mr. Justice LaForme resigned, but what we do know is that the

remaining commissioners are staying on till June 1. With all due respect, when I look at progress made with the TRC, and with great sympathy to you, it must be difficult to have any progress when the highlight of the day seems to be the bickering between commissioners, the holding over of commissioners who are not going to be there after June 1, and I would say the slowness on the government's side in getting replacements for the commissioners.

Why I say this must be difficult for you is that there's some urgency, and perhaps you could answer these questions. There is a five-year timeline for your mandate. The way I see it, since June 1 you have set out some strategic planning and a mandate. Once you get an all-new commission, that may well, with input coming from above down, change somewhat and you might as well say you're starting from scratch. Is five years enough? How much of the \$60 million has been used to date? I understand you have premises, the lease for which may be up in March. What are you going to do about that? You have within the mandate a suggested report period of two years from inception, which I believe was June 2008. So in June 2010, are you going to be in a position—perhaps another six months, I understand—to do a report on the historical findings and recommendations?

I guess what I'm saying is, unless there's some dispatch on this matter from the government and the new commission, clearly, do you think you can meet the timelines and get done what is expected of you?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Clearly there was conflict within the commission. I wasn't privy to those discussions. We were not part of the discussions headed by Justice Iacobucci to find a solution for moving forward.

With regard to whether there's enough funding and enough time for moving forward, that's a decision that will have to be made when the new chair and commissioners are appointed. As I said, we're doing everything we can to make sure that the foundation is in place for the new chair and commissioners when they come on board, hopefully by June 1.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Right.

What about this two-year report? Am I right in reading that in two years you have to do a full report on the historic findings and recommendations, with the possibility of a six-month extension?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Do you anticipate asking for the six-month extension, or advising that, in your role, to the commissioners, whomever they may be?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes, I definitely anticipate that we'll be asking for the six-month extension. Again, as to whether the commission and the new chair come back to the government and ask for an extension down the road on the five years, that will be up to the new commissioners.

●(1015)

Mr. Brian Murphy: We know, I think, that perhaps there were personality conflicts, perhaps philosophical conflicts—which, again, we're not all privy to—but really, to the people affected, that doesn't matter. All of us as parliamentarians, particularly the government, have an obligation to move on this. You're somewhat captive, because you don't have a full commission to work with.

Is there any reason that you can see why the commissioners who are there now are staying until June? It seems an awfully long time to be saying, "I'm done with this, and I can't stay—but I'll stay till June." What effective work can be done from now until June by two commissioners who are departing and who are not going to be part of the final process?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: The commissioners in their public statement last week or the week before have committed to being available to advise on the transition, to support the new commission in its transition phase, and to provide support to the secretariat as well.

Mr. Brian Murphy: But as I understand it, the commission—the three members, as they were, as of October of last year—never met on the substantive issues.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Again, I only started in September. I wasn't aware....

They were meeting. I wasn't a party to the conflict. As I said, it was clear that there was conflict. I wasn't involved with that.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Well, it's clear that that's *all* there was. No work product came out of it.

I guess what I'm asking, from a let's-get-it-done point of view, which all parliamentarians should join in on, is what utility is there in having those commissioners stay until June? Do they come into the office every day?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: No, they don't come into the office every day.

Again, Mr. Chair, I simply wasn't party to the discussions that led to them staying until June 1.

Mr. Brian Murphy: How often are they coming in to advise you with respect to the development of the Treasury Board submission, the development of an organizational chart, to initiate processes, to meet federal reporting obligations? It sounds like work that you're pretty capable of doing on your own, frankly.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes, the secretariat has been doing all of the work that you've just mentioned. The commissioners are not in the office.

Mr. Brian Murphy: All right.

And do you have premises?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes, we do.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Is the lease up?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: No. We're right in downtown Ottawa, at 100 Sparks Street.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Of the \$60 million, how much has been spent?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: To date we have spent \$2.4 million.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Clearly that's all administrative and salary costs.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes.

Mr. Brian Murphy: So by June.... I mean, nothing will happen until June, or later.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Well, we're doing limited outreach to the extent that we can. I think it's extremely important that we hear from survivors when we can.

We won't be making final decisions on the mandate activities. For example, we are anxious to get moving on our first national event. We won't do that until we have a chair in place to approve the date and location.

Mr. Brian Murphy: So for the total up to June, your estimate would be how much of the \$60 million?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Up until June, we're about \$3.4 million.

Mr. Brian Murphy: And that includes the salaries for the commissioners who are serving until June.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes.

Mr. Brian Murphy: That's it, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: That's it, Mr. Murphy.

Now we'll proceed to Monsieur Lemay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Ms. Nabigon, please rest assured that I am not angry with you on a personal level and the remarks I'm about to make do not take away from your work in any manner. Since September, I would not have wanted to be in your shoes. I don't know what has happened within this commission and I don't know what is going on right now, but you have a big problem.

I'm going to read out the most important sentence in your opening remarks, and I hope that the people on both sides of this room will listen: "We need to gain back the trust of survivors and restore confidence in the process." That's certainly a safe statement to make. So far the commission has been shooting from behind and the score is 2-0. You won't get a third chance. I hope that someone somewhere will understand this.

In my riding alone, four survivors died over the past year. So those are four survivors who will not be able to testify. There were 132 boarding schools.

The commission is starting to be very centralized. Sometimes I am in favour of centralization. But to my mind, when I read: "Over the course of the next few months[...] Conclude the selection process[...] Hire regional liaisons[...]" All I see is red tape. The commission absolutely has to get down to work.

Since I knew that the commission would be coming to give testimony before us, I went around my riding and talked to some people. No one understands why seven national events will be held and no one is in favour of that. All the aboriginal people and the Algonquians in my riding are asking me why people are not going to come and see them in their region. Mrs. McDougall is 78 years old, and so she will never go to Quebec City or Gatineau. On the other hand, if you come to Senneterre or to Amos, she will be there. All the Indians from Obedjiwan who were taken to Amos by force will never come to Gatineau. I strongly suggest that you review these seven national events.

The aboriginal people want to give their testimony in the place that they come from, the place where they belong. I would suggest that you choose some of the 132 places where there were boarding schools and that you go visit them. Go out to the regions, don't just go to Montreal, Gatineau and Vancouver. In Quebec, nearly all the Indians who went to the boarding schools live in the North; they do not live in Montreal. A few live in Quebec City, but not many. Will you follow up on our recommendations?

Why were the mandates of the commissioners misinterpreted? I've read all the articles on the resignation of the commissioners. Up until now, your commission has been operating really badly. I'm sorry to be mean.

You talked about June. Do you think that you will be able to turn things around and make progress in a short period of time?

• (1020)

[English]

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Thank you for those comments.

I certainly understand the frustration coming from communities and survivors. I mentioned briefly an addition to the seven national events that will be held across the country. It's our intention to have them where we're advised to have them. We will be having a 10-member survivors' group, which will advise us on that. The commission will go where survivors want them to go.

But in addition to that, we will also be funding community events. We're developing the criteria for those events. It will be available shortly. It will be posted on our website and will be made widely available so that communities know how to apply for it.

The other thing we'll be doing, which we're working on finalizing very, very soon, hopefully, and certainly as soon as we have a new commission in place, is statement gathering. Again, we'll be going wherever we can, to communities across the country, starting, hopefully, with vulnerable elders, the survivors. We know that survivors are elderly and dying. We want to get their statements before they die. We'll be out there in the community as soon as we possibly can, talking with survivors. If I could, I will just mention that we've also been working with the Legacy of Hope Foundation, which is also helping us gather those statements.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Has your commission obtained the documents from each one of these boarding schools?

Actually, the school that I am very concerned about is the boarding school in Saint-Marc in the Abitibi region, where nearly all

the aboriginal people from northern Quebec went. In their community, whether it be Obedjiwan north of La Tuque, where the Attikameks were, or anywhere else, one finds what they call the walls of shame or the registries of aboriginal people who went to these boarding schools. There even are photos.

Has anyone contacted these communities? They are very small communities, and I must admit that I agree with Ms. Crowder somewhat, when she said that some communities don't even have telephones. Don't talk to them about computers or Internet sites, because they don't know about such things. So, how are you going to reach these communities? In fact, the events that occurred were always in the remote communities.

• (1025)

[English]

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: To answer your question about the files, the photos and the records of students, yes, Indian Affairs has extensive files on residential schools. According to the settlement agreement, they'll help us with those; we'll have access to those. We're working with the churches as well to provide us with their records.

Again, as far as getting out, we know that people are living in remote communities and that they can't come to the central location, so we will go out to where the survivors are.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I see.

The Chair: Ms. Crowder, you have seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you for coming today. This is a very important issue, and you can tell there's a lot of passion around it.

I don't need a response, but I want to echo Monsieur Lemay's comments around the seven national events. This has to be more than a PR exercise. I live on Vancouver Island, and I can tell you that if you hold an event in Vancouver, many of the elders will not be willing to go there; some will, some won't. There has to be some recognition that many of these survivors were taken from their communities and sent somewhere else, and they don't want to be told once again that they are being sent somewhere else. It's very important that there be a recognition of that.

I understand that a benchmark survey on public awareness of the Indian residential school legacy was done and that it was reported in July 2008. I wonder how that information is going to be used, since it is a benchmark survey, to inform the activities of the commission.

I'm going to ask you a couple of questions to which I'd like answers, and that's one.

Has there been any consideration given to appointing an Inuit commissioner to the truth and reconciliation process? We've heard fairly consistently that the Inuit have been left out of this conversation.

With regard to the issue around restoring confidence in the process, I think the trust and confidence in this process has been badly damaged by what happened. Of course, it's outside of your control. I'm sure that you would have preferred to have the commissioners stay in place and work together, but the reality is that many people believe it's going to be difficult to get this process back on the rails. A Treasury Board submission has been done, but do you know what work went into ensuring that the truth and reconciliation process will remain independent of the government and how that's going to be set up?

In the absence of having a functioning group of commissioners, to whom does your secretariat report? Where is your accountability line around this? You really don't have functioning commissioners. Will survivors actually have input into the selection of those new commissioners?

If you get through those questions in my time, I want to ask you about the selection process for the Indian residential schools survivor committee.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: With regard to the benchmark survey, can I get back to you on that? We'll provide information on the benchmarks—

Ms. Jean Crowder: Will you provide that in writing to the committee?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: We will.

Unfortunately, I cannot answer your second question, the one with regard to the appointment of the Inuit commissioner. We weren't involved in the previous process leading up to the development of the current process, which is the new table that Justice Iacobucci is chairing to find a new chair and commissioner.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So really people have to contact Justice Iacobucci.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: I would suggest that, yes.

With regard to the work that went into ensuring that the commission is independent, the TRC secretariat is set up as a government department, so it reports to Parliament through the Minister of Indian Affairs, but the relationship is very much for the sake of reporting to Parliament. We don't have a relationship directly with the minister.

• (1030)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Sorry—I just want to clarify this. So for the secretariat, the reporting relationship is with INAC?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: That's only for the sake of reporting to Parliament.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So outside of that parliamentary reporting process, who do you report to?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: We report to the commission.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay. So just out of curiosity, since there is this relationship with INAC for reporting, did INAC staff roll over into the commission—

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: No.

Ms. Jean Crowder: —or into the secretariat?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: No. There are some who we're seconding, including me. I came from INAC on a secondment basis, but when we have our staffing authorities, we'll either hire them or they'll go back. There will be different arrangements in place for hiring staff.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So in terms of mandate and values and work performance, I assume somebody is going to assess the work performance of the department. It's the commissioners who will do that rather than INAC?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes.

Ms. Jean Crowder: With that reporting relationship through INAC, if you produce a report that INAC doesn't like, do you still get to put the report to Parliament without INAC changing it?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: For reporting to Parliament, again, it's through the minister.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So the minister will have some influence on the report?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes.

Ms. Jean Crowder: What about the survivors' input into the selection of commissioners?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: I don't know.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So we would again need to have people contact Justice Iacobucci.

How about the selection process for the Indian residential school survivor committee? It says here that over the course of the next few months the secretariat will conclude the selection process, so I assume the selection process is already under way.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Have some members already been selected?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes. There was a process through which all the parties to the settlement agreement met, and they came up with a list of nine or ten names. There needs to be ten in total, and the federal government will appoint those named after consulting with the Assembly of First Nations.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I'm sorry, who is looking at these names right now?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: All of the parties have selected the names.

Ms. Jean Crowder: When you're saying "all of the parties", who are all of the parties?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: I mean the parties to the settlement agreement. Do you want me to list them?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Yes.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: They are the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapirisat, the churches, and representatives for the survivors.

Ms. Jean Crowder: They meet, they review this list, and they make recommendations. Then the government will decide whether to accept those recommendations.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: That's after consulting with the Assembly of First Nations.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So right now, if people want to be part of that Indian residential school survivor committee, to be part of that process, who do they contact? It seems to me—and we talked about cultural appropriateness—this body should have a significant role in advising the commissioners and the secretariat.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: The opportunity for selecting names has concluded, although if they're interested in participating in the future they could send their names to us, to the secretariat. They could go online and do that, just in case there are vacancies in the future.

The Chair: We're finished here, Ms. Crowder. Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Payne.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate you and your staff coming today, Ms. Nabigon. I have a couple of questions. First of all, maybe you could outline for us the goals of the commission and how they will promote reconciliation, and then I'll ask my next question.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: The goal of the TRC is to lay the foundation for reconciliation. I doubt reconciliation will have been achieved within the short five-year mandate that we'll be in existence. Reconciliation will be a long-term and ongoing process, but as I mentioned, at the end of the five-year period for our mandate, we hope that we'll have heard from all former students or as many former students as we possibly can and that people will have listened, that other Canadians will have listened, and that through that process of hearing storytelling and having people actively listening and hearing what went on at residential schools and about the legacy that resulted in those residential schools, there will be a beginning of reconciliation.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

Just in terms of the Canadian people hearing that, is there a process that you intend to have the commission go through to get that information out to Canadians so that they will understand what was going on in the past history?

• (1035)

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes. Hopefully, everybody who possibly can fit into the seven national events will participate. There'll be a report. As someone has mentioned already, at the end of two years we'll have to do a report that will make recommendations to the parties.

In addition to the seven national events, we'll have community events. We're hoping that not just aboriginal communities but neighbouring communities will participate in those activities as well, and that people will start to engage and listen to each other. The truth will be told. Through that, I hope, we'll achieve reconciliation.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you. That actually leads me to the next question.

In terms of the seven events, has it been determined at this point where those locations are going to be?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: No. We've been working on the framework for holding the events, but we're holding off on setting a date and a location until we have a chaired commission in place.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay. Just in terms of the overall events and the funding, I believe it's \$60 million for this?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes.

Mr. LaVar Payne: My next question is whether there is going to be sufficient funding to hold these events as well as attend other communities.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Again, as to whether or not we have sufficient funding, I think that will have to be assessed once the new commission is in place, because of the fact that by that point, if indeed it takes until June, we'll have lost a year.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

Do you have anything?

Mr. John Duncan: Yes. Just to follow up on that, the way I view this, you haven't actually lost a year, because during this timeframe you've had a lot of opportunity as an administration to set a lot of things in place. For example, you have your survivor committee virtually picked. You've set up your offices. In your presentation, you went through a whole list of things that you've accomplished.

So my question really is this: it is still conceivable, is it not, that the five-year timeframe is quite possibly enough time to do the job?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes. If we're told to do it within the existing mandate and the existing funding, we'll do it.

There are a couple of things there. One is related to money and the fact that we'll have to keep the walls up for an extra year, and there will be overhead, rent, salaries for our employees, and that kind of thing. But there's also the fact that under the settlement agreement, survivors were provided with a five-year mandate in which to tell their stories. I think that's something that will also have to be assessed.

As people have mentioned, survivors are still waiting for things to begin. We've done outreach to the extent that we can, but they're waiting to hear from commissioners. We'll have to make an assessment as to whether the expectation is that we'll continue for five years, starting from the date of the new commission.

Mr. John Duncan: Do I have more time?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. John Duncan: In your statement today you reference on page 3 the final report that the commission will produce, and we heard from Mr. Murphy about the two-year report, which is quite separate and apart. Will there be interim reports leading up to your final report?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes. Actually, under the settlement agreement there is only a requirement for an interim report at the two-year mark. I would expect that the commission will want to have some sort of final report, but the settlement agreement only requires an interim report.

Mr. John Duncan: On these hearings, they're described as being "safe" and "respectful" and held in a "culturally appropriate manner". They can be done "one-on-one...in a written statement or in a group setting". Are those publicly accessible in any way?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Just to be clear, it's not a criminal tribunal, and as such we won't be doing hearings. What I was referring to was the statement gatherings, the opportunities for survivors to tell their stories, and as part of that, for other Canadians to hear them. It will be entirely up to the individual survivor.

I've been to gatherings of 500 survivors where there's no end of survivors who'd like to get up to tell their stories. They want people to know what happened to them. Those opportunities will exist through community events and national events. Other survivors will be telling their stories for the first time. We want to provide them with all the privacy they need. It could be the survivor and a statement taker. We'll have an opportunity for them to do it in writing without anybody present. They could just mail it in to us if they're not comfortable with having somebody present.

•(1040)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Duncan.

[Translation]

For the second round, we will restrict ourselves to three minutes, and we will begin with Mr. Murphy.

[English]

Mr. Brian Murphy: I'll speak very quickly.

It seems to me that a lot of the issue of delay has to do with the commissioners named. It might have something to do with severance or their wanting to stay on longer. The concern is not germane to your job, but you did say that they would be useful in terms of overlap or transition. You said, in part in response to Mr. Duncan's question, or it might have been Mr. Payne's question, "if it takes until June" to get new commissioners.... Has there been discussion between you and Minister Strahl or officials at INAC of appointments of new commissioners before June?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: No, I'm being optimistic.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Okay. I'm sorry to hang on your words, but it's pretty much all we have, and I appreciate it. I think you said you would reasonably anticipate the work to take five years from the appointment of the new commissioners.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes.

Mr. Brian Murphy: And that if you are told to do it, you will, which is to do it within five years from June 1. It reminds me of somebody being asked to pour a foundation in the pouring rain: "If you tell us to do it, we will." We were very clear that it should be five years from the appointment of the commissioners.

My final questions have to do with the accountability that Ms. Crowder was talking about. In the absence of a chief commissioner since October and the two commissioners on their way out—essentially it is a dysfunctional commission—is the secretariat reporting directly to the minister? How many discussions have you had directly with Minister Strahl? It would seem to me that a minister who has a dysfunctional commission might want to check in with the secretariat, with you in particular, and ask, "How's it going? What can we do?" This is the system of ministerial responsibility we have in this country. Please tell me that he has met with you on various occasions to see what can be done to expedite fixing the lacuna that exists here.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Minister Strahl has actually been very respectful of the need for independence. The secretariat has been fine. We've been talking with the department as need be. Caroline Davis, who reported before me, has been very, very helpful in providing us with whatever support we need in getting up and running. No, I haven't had discussions with Minister Strahl, nor have I really felt the need to. I have no doubt that if I did, he would take my call. We've dealt with the department; we have not dealt with Minister Strahl.

Mr. Brian Murphy: In short, you're really not reporting to anyone.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: The commissioners are still there. To be honest, no, I don't have a reporting relationship with the commissioners.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Okay.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Rickford.

Mr. Greg Rickford: First of all, thank you, Mr. Chair, and to the witnesses for coming here today.

I have one point and one question.

I want to echo the sentiments of my colleagues on the locations. You've invited us to make some recommendations, but certainly I hope you'll be listening to survivors' wishes.

I have at least six qualified Indian residential schools in my riding, which is 321,000 square kilometres. Twenty-five of those communities have no access by road and a number of the survivors live in those communities.

I think that helps us focus on that, so I'm hoping we're not talking about a Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg—well, Winnipeg perhaps—sort of national tour, and I'll put my pitch in for Kenora, certainly. That has to be kept in mind.

I did a cursory review and I have a question. Is there support integrated into the commission's mandate? When we went from the alternative dispute resolution process into the IAP, we started to see that there were some claims for student-on-student abuse. I'm concerned, and I want to bring it forth to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We don't want this to be any more divisive.

There's funding available, with Health Canada's support and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. I realize they're separate entities, but in my mind we should be thinking about this all together, because there are going to be things that are revealed by folks and they're going to need the support. That's just one example of something that's emerging under the new IAP that's particularly difficult.

•(1045)

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes, and we are working closely with Health Canada, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and the Assembly of First Nations to make sure those supports are in place.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Okay.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: There is a strategy being developed, a health support strategy.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Who is participating in that discussion?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: The parties to the settlement agreement. The secretariat is involved. There are survivors at the table, and I would expect that the survivor committee, when it's up and running, will be very interested in that issue as well.

Again, doing limited outreach, I'm actually going to Sioux Lookout tomorrow to meet with a group of survivors.

Mr. Greg Rickford: That's a great location for one of your national events.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes, I'm sure they'll tell me that too.

The visit is to get their feedback and hear what it is they want us to do in that regard. If there are not enough supports, we'll be talking to Health Canada. It's an extremely important part of the whole process to make sure the health supports are in place.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rickford.

[*Translation*]

Now, we will move on to the members from the Bloc.

Mr. Lemay, you have three minutes.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Ms. Nabigon, have you read the Departmental Performance Report of March 31, 2008? If you have read it, I would like to refer you to page 15 of the French version. It reads as follows: "Settlement of Indian Residential Schools Canada is responsible for administering the independent assessment process..." and here it reads, listen carefully: "... implementing the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission."

If I implement something, that means I supervise it. Do you see what I'm driving at? Do you follow me so far? Fine. So, if someone is not doing his work, someone else will have to take a look at things.

I have a question for you. What is the current role of the Honourable Frank Iacobucci—allow me to refer to him as the Honourable Justice Iacobucci, because when someone has sat on the Supreme Court, he deserves that title; he is a very good judge—on this extraordinary day of February 12? What is his role in the designation of the new commissioners?

[*English*]

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Justice Iacobucci was appointed by the parties to chair a process for finding a resolution after Justice Harry LaForme quit as the chair. He is now tasked with chairing the process that will replace both the chair and the two commissioners who have resigned effective June 1.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I'm going to ask you a tough question. If you had an expectation of our committee, what would it be? How can we help you in this process so that things can move more quickly, so that things can improve? Is there anything that we can do to help you?

[*English*]

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Thank you for that offer.

Again, we're waiting anxiously for a new commission to be appointed. Maybe that's a question you could ask the new commission when they're on board. We're continuing to do whatever we can to get ready for that new commission.

I appreciate the offer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: So, we will tell the Conservatives to hurry up. It's not your job to do that, it's our job. We will mention this to the minister when he comes. You can count on us.

• (1050)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemay.

[*English*]

Mr. Albrecht, for three minutes.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to follow up a bit on this problem that we seem to have about the seven national events. I think it's important that we read—in context—what has been said. The seven national events are to promote awareness. There will be, in addition to that, community events as requested. I think it's important that we keep that in perspective for the public record: every person who has been affected will have the opportunity to tell their story in their community.

I want to come back to a point raised by Mr. Duncan, and that's regarding the possibility of people sharing their experience in a safe, respectful, culturally sensitive way, a private one-on-one or a public discussion. You mentioned that one of the possibilities might be sharing in a group of up to 500 people.

Are there any restrictions placed on those who will be sharing their stories in terms of specifically naming people who might not have the possibility to defend themselves? Possibly they're deceased. Possibly they're in another area of the country. That's one of my concerns.

You probably have something in place for that, but I'd like to hear you address that.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: To clarify, what I said was that I've heard survivors talk in front of gatherings of 500. At the national events, we hope to have thousands.

Just on that point, we'll make sure that people who are speaking, who are telling their stories, will be prepared in advance. The settlement agreement does say that people cannot be named, although I can't remember exactly what it says.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Allegations cannot be raised without...

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Right, so we're making sure that we have a strategy. It might be hard to avoid 100%, but we're doing everything we can to make sure that people at all of our gatherings are aware that they can't speak about people whom they may be accusing of crimes or whatever.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you very much.

The Chair: You still have another minute, Mr. Albrecht, if you wish.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: One of my colleagues might want to use it.

The Chair: Anybody? Okay.

Then we'll go to Ms. Crowder, for three minutes.

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

I want to make sure I'm understanding this. You indicated that the agreement says there's an interim report, which is the two-year report, but there is no final report. Is that right?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Right—not according to the settlement agreement.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So there'll be no final reporting out on results and events, no accounting for how public money was spent in a final report other than the normal budget cycle?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: I would expect that there would be.

Ms. Jean Crowder: But there's no requirement.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: I'm not sure why there's no requirement, but I can't imagine that the commissioners won't want to present a final report.

Ms. Jean Crowder: It's pretty shocking, actually. I'm surprised there's no requirement.

I know this isn't your responsibility, but I just want to be on record as saying how surprising it is that you have something that has a significant mandate, with significant public funds attached to it, hoping to achieve significant results, and there's no final reporting process. That's pretty appalling. I'm hoping that the commissioners will see fit to take that responsibility on to do that.

In terms of the independence in the relationship with the department, I think part of the concern—this is kind of the trust-building part—is that people were hoping to see the secretariat operate quite independently. I respect the fact that there is a need to get information from the department, but it sounds as though, between staff coming over from Indian and Northern Affairs and the absence of any kind of other reporting relationship.... I think there are some optics around the independence of the secretariat.

So my question to you is twofold. One, how are you going to regenerate that trust among the public and among the survivors that your secretariat is independent and operating at arm's length? And two, what are you going to do about the damage control?

Perhaps you could tell me what your plans are to address those issues.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: With regard to the independence of the secretariat, because we are in a transition stage at this point and don't have our own funding yet, we depend on the department for corporate services, but it's very much at a working technical level.

They don't interfere at all in our policies or in the work we're doing to move forward. They're providing corporate services such as procurement services and HR services, but only, hopefully, until we get our money on April 1. The issue of independence really hasn't come up.

•(1055)

Ms. Jean Crowder: I think there are some optics around it, though—

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Yes, I agree.

Ms. Jean Crowder: —and I think that's the piece you're going to have to deal with, because just saying, “trust me, we're independent”, isn't going to work for people.

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: Right. But after April 1 we'll have cut that relationship and we'll be getting our corporate services elsewhere.

Ms. Jean Crowder: And what about the—

The Chair: That's it. I'm sorry, Ms. Crowder.

We're going to go back to Mr. Payne for one minute and finish up this round.

Mr. Payne.

[*Translation*]

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

You did talk about the secretariat. I'd just like to ask you a question around how far along you are in completing the work on the secretariat. When might it be completed?

Ms. Aideen Nabigon: As you can imagine, a lot of the work we've been doing over the past five or six months that I've been there is just standing up the secretariat as a federal government department. We had to make sure to get our Treasury Board submission done and approved. We've done an organization chart so that we can start hiring staff. That's currently being approved by the Public Service Commission. We've entered into an MOU with the Canadian Human Rights Commission to provide us with corporate services after April 1.

Really, we're getting to that point where we have a strong foundation in place for the secretariat as a functional department to support the commission when it comes on board. As I mentioned, we've been developing the policies and the initiatives for moving forward on the mandate activities to the extent that we can, implementing schedule N, but being careful not to commit a future chair to a direction that he or she may not want to go in.

The Chair: That will conclude it.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Ms. Nabigon. We appreciated your presentation.

[*English*]

Thank you to all members as well. You don't need to hear this from me, but I must say that I thought all of the questions today were thoughtful, precise, and very well done.

There's just one item to follow up on before we adjourn. To follow up on our last meeting, the question came out in regard to the circulation of CVs for the notices of appointment that you will be circulated on automatically. This can be done on request now. You should be reminded that the Standing Orders provide 30 sitting days for time to consider those questions, but in accordance with the Standing Orders, they will and can be circulated to you on request. We'll get those out to you. That was the one item we had left over from the last meeting.

Madam Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: This room is ridiculously small.

The Chair: I agree.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I really urge us to find a room that accommodates the staff, the witnesses and their staff, and other people who want to sit in.

The Chair: Yes, there's no question about it. You may know that the Promenade Building is being renovated right now, so we are

under some constraints that way, but I mentioned this to the clerk. We'll endeavour to make sure that we have proper quarters for our meetings.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. The meeting is adjourned.

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