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Mr. Massimo Pacetti

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•(1015)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.)): Good morning, everybody. Thank you for allowing us to come to Manitoba and for taking the time out of your day to present us with your briefs. We only have four groups on this panel, so it's not going to be that time-sensitive, but I still want to keep on time, if possible.

Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, I understand you want to go ahead of the other witnesses—if that's okay with everybody else—because you have a prior engagement.

We're here pursuant to Standing Order 83.1, on the pre-budget consultations for 2005. The way it works is I'll allow you about seven to eight minutes for your opening brief or opening remarks, and then the members will want to ask questions. We'll do that afterwards.

If we can go in the order that I have here, we'll begin with the University of Winnipeg and Mr. Axworthy.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (President, University of Winnipeg): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, let me say it's a great honour. In my days in government, I was never allowed to appear before the finance committee of the House of Commons, so this is a brand-new experience for me. I had to appear before a lot of others, but not this one.

I'm also very pleased to be in the company of the other delegations. I admire the kinds of initiatives and work they're doing. It's also an honour to be associated with them.

I apologize to members of the committee. I have an engagement with the Minister of Advanced Education in 25 or 30 minutes. She's my boss, so I have to be there.

I hope my short remarks will help in a general presentation. If there are any questions that members have afterwards, I'd be glad to respond by e-mail or by personal contact.

Let me just say to the committee members, other than those who are here from the Winnipeg constituencies, that I'm really here to talk about a tale of two cities. I'm only back in Winnipeg just shortly over a year, and I can see on the one hand a renewal and renaissance, an attempt by the city to reinvent itself, to respond to new economic demands in technology, information, and trade. But at the same time, as you will probably know from your briefing books or from when you've been here, it's a city going through a serious review and reflection, tinged with some anger and indignation over the

continued experience of young people being killed or committing suicide, or the despair that comes from being hungry, or the lack of proper accommodation or the proper opportunity.

It is a reality of both these situations that I see directly as president of a university that's situated in the downtown. We've made a choice as a university to stay in the downtown. We're part of it. We are a neighbour in that area. On the one hand, we're being expected to increasingly be a driver of the economy, because universities not only train and educate new workforces, they're also increasingly being asked to undertake local employment programs, to begin to establish renewal programs, and to relate themselves to a shortage of services, open space, and recreation. What we're trying to do is share our resources with the community, to try to take the gown and put it back on the town, if you like. But as an inner city institution, like all the other institutions, several of which are here, we must take some responsibility for responding to the issue of poverty that exists here. We are scrambling to meet the educational learning needs of new arrivals, and certainly to me a key mission for my university is to support the work of developing an education strategy for this country.

I believe there are answers to this. I'm here before the committee because I think there is some glimmer of hope, and I take my inspiration from the Governor General's appearance here in the city, where, in her appearance before Children of the Earth High School yesterday, she offered that hope. It really means we are here to make a case to this committee of the need to mount a major attack on the issue of poverty in this country, especially in our inner cities, our reserves in the north, and in parts of our rural areas.

I have to say to you, Mr. Chair and members, I think this takes precedence over tax cuts or individual tax rebates or even debt reduction. I think it's time we mobilized the surpluses that the federal government and other governments are generating to make a wholesale, holistic, integrated approach to dealing with poverty, of which a central part is the poverty experienced by many of our aboriginal people.

I think there is reason to make that case and there is good evidence to show that it can work. A study that has just been recently released on the 2001 census of aboriginal people living in our cities shows that this group of Canadians is making substantial progress in gaining employment and overcoming an income gap with non-aboriginal Canadians. That is especially so here in the city of Winnipeg, where the employment level of aboriginal people has risen from 53% to 65% in a matter of about fifteen years.

Considering that the usual depiction of living conditions in urban Winnipeg or urban Canada is one focusing on problems of crime or family breakdown or substance abuse, this assessment I think provides a very needed and constructive anecdote to all the too frequently negative perceptions that pervade our media and inform our conventional wisdom.

• (1020)

I don't want to downplay the seriousness of addressing the disparities faced by inner-city people, aboriginal people, those on the reserves, and new immigrants arriving, but the report shows there are grounds for optimism that the barriers to social and economic equity can be breached. There's a compelling case to support the call that Grand Chief Phil Fontaine has made to mount a major effort to eliminate poverty among our aboriginal people.

The StatsCan study provides us strong evidence on what is driving this improvement in the attainments of aboriginal people. An essential thrust of any anti-poverty strategy, in a word, is education. School attendance among 15- to 24-year-old aboriginals rose substantially, as has the proportion of those finishing post-secondary education. Most telling—and the most important fact in that study to me—was that the employment rates in urban centres of aboriginal adults who had completed university degrees were equal to those of their non-aboriginal counterparts. Unfortunately, the other part of that equation is that far fewer actually attain those degrees, which is really the nub of the problem.

These generally encouraging statistics owe a lot to increased funding and the dedication of those who have laboured long and hard to mount educational programs targeted at deepening the educational opportunities. There are those at the table here who can talk to that issue, because they're on the front line. Since returning to Winnipeg a year ago, I have been impressed by the enormous energy and initiative being shown. I can also say that my own university has seen enrolments of aboriginal students substantially increase and has seen the development of programs for student support services and aboriginal studies.

Let me make one point on the previous presentations I listened to: access is certainly a key issue, but it is not simply an issue of lowering tuition fees or providing money, because it takes a much broader approach. It needs support, counselling, housing, and special services. You can't increase access otherwise. In the universities we are now deeply engaged in working in grades 4, 5, and 6 in inner city schools to help create pathways, to do mentoring, and to open up digital educational opportunities. So if you want the institutions that have the resources and capacity to contribute to this, then you have to make sure there are the requisite resources to make the case. It simply means that in a province like this, where there is no flexibility to increase university funding because of the freezes, it has to come through a more direct transfer, or a targeted program, which is what I'd like to see, to deal directly with special kinds of educational needs.

I guess what I'm really saying is, first, that educational learning is a partnership between the university, the community organizations, the aboriginal community, and governments themselves. But it still lacks an overarching comprehensive plan that would eliminate overlap and make the best use of resources. It still suffers from a

shortage of finances and it still needs far more capacity and facilities. And there's a need to explore the potential of using the new technologies of education, particularly digital education.

Marileen and I are involved in a very interesting experiment through the aboriginal training centre at Red River College and the University of Winnipeg to set up a wireless corridor in downtown Winnipeg, which will provide a brand-new roadway for developing educational programs where we can work together. That's the kind of innovation that can take place to substantially broaden the offerings.

I think the challenge of this issue can be seen mostly in the same study. The projected growth of the aboriginal population will be double that of the non-aboriginal population; the aboriginal population represents the most significant group of young people coming into the labour market. Within about 10 years, close to one in five Manitoba workers will be of aboriginal origin. They are our human resource, and they are our ability to come to grips with how you get economic growth, development, and productivity.

The timing couldn't be better to launch a new national strategy, and with the first ministers meeting on the horizon, I think this committee could play a very important role in saying it's not enough just to transfer or allocate, but we have to be smart, we have to target, and we have to really look at comprehensive ways of making sure the doors are open and the supports are there.

Thank you very much.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Axworthy.

We don't have a copy of your brief. Can you send us a copy?

Mr. Lloyd Axworthy: I will certainly do that. I'll clean it up a little, because I typed it myself last night and I haven't been known for my laptop skills as of late.

The Chair: Seeing how inexperienced you are with House of Commons committees, we do encourage presenters to submit their briefs.

Mr. Lloyd Axworthy: I will submit it to you.

The Chair: Thank you.

From the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources Development Inc., Ms. McCormick.

Ms. Marileen McCormick (Executive Director, Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources Development Inc.): Good morning, and thank you for allowing the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development to present. I'm going to give a short overview, and then Rhonda is going to talk about some of the issues we have.

As you can see from my brief, we are an employment and training program. We have been in existence for over 30 years, working with the aboriginal people in Winnipeg in terms of employment, training, and education. We have a program that's fairly comprehensive. It deals with basic employment skills for aboriginal people.

We have a program where we work with our recent grads so that we can help them move into the workplace very quickly. In our central employment service, we had 600 employment placements in 2004, and 18% of those were under the age of 24. In our staffing solutions program, which is for our recent grads, we had 575 employment placements. One of the reasons we started this program was that aboriginal people don't have a long history in the workplace. So we try to bridge that gap.

We have an education program with a full range of programs, beginning with literacy, providing provincially accredited high school.... From there we also go to our Aboriginal People's College, where we work in partnership with various institutions in Manitoba, and even outside Manitoba, to help our people get college degrees. We had over 150 grads in our education program over the last three years.

In our training programs, we work closely with institutions and with employers, and we look at industry-driven training. We want our people to get jobs as soon as they're finished their training. In that program we had 376 trained placements in 2004.

We're also a federal government AHRDA program, an aboriginal human resources development program. We're one of the few urban AHRDA holders. We administer over \$4 million yearly. We work with our own training programs as well as with community-based training programs and institutions. One of the issues we have in this program is that in the services we provide, we do not have funding specifically for youth, yet more and more youth are requiring training. So although we have the responsibility to train youth, we don't have the resources.

We also have a day care centre. We developed it specifically to deal with our trainees, so that our students would be able to have a safe and culturally appropriate place for their children.

I would just like to comment a little bit on what Mr. Axworthy said about working in partnership. That's one of the things CAHRD does, and we do it very well. We try to stretch our resources and work with industry, institutions—anybody who wants to work with us.

Now I'm going to get Rhonda to take over and talk more specifically about some of the programming issues we have.

• (1030)

Ms. Rhonda McCorriston (Director, Aboriginal Peoples College, Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources Development Inc.): Good morning. I'd like to bring your attention to some of the best practices.

We've sat at the table with Madam Bradshaw, we've sat at the table with the AHRDA groups, and we've sat at the table with a lot of other people to discuss the idea of productivity. Productivity is the bringing together of industry, quality skill, education, and the community base for those who are unemployed. That's exactly what CAHRD does. Some of the programs I want to bring your attention to are partnerships we've developed.

We have a very strong partnership with Standard Aero. We've just finished training aboriginal women in a two-year project to be gas

turbine overhaul repairers. They are fixing airplane engines. One of these women has nine children at home.

We also went to the regional health authority and talked to Diagnostic Services of Manitoba, which is brand new. We're now training medical lab people, phlebotomists—the people who run around with those little blue things in the hospital and take blood samples. We're training people to do that right now with Diagnostic Services.

We're also working on a new AHRDA enhancement as part of our project. We're going to train 60 women and 60 men to be welders, machinists, bench workers, carpenters, fifth-class power engineers, and splicers, or linesmen. Those are all with industry as well.

I guess the important thing that I'm here to say today, about the aboriginal community that went to our centre and the 65% employment rate that we've just jumped to, you're all very welcome.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Rhonda McCorriston: I think what we've done with our AHRDA in the last 15 years has made a difference in Winnipeg and in the employment rate.

One of the things that Lloyd alluded to was the culture of poverty. And it is a culture of poverty. While culture is very important to many of our clients—they come from a variety of different backgrounds, a variety of different areas—one of the only things they share in common in the inner city is the culture of poverty. Generations of people have not worked, have not acquired education, and need an opportunity to move up a ladder into something that's important. Evidence of this is the fact that school divisions are saying that almost 30% of aboriginal kids are not moving on past grade 9, and are considered inactive. So the youth programs are really important.

Many want to move on in their lives. I believe they're motivated, they're interested, but the problem is they don't know how. Sometimes it's a lack of self-discipline, sometimes it's a lack of knowing what the next steps are, and how to engage. Many haven't got the ability through not having child care, and not knowing how to get hold of that, or transportation, or they have little understanding of the labour market. All of those things are really access issues.

The need is for targeted investment in aboriginal adults, for training and education. Adults, when they improve their lives, improve the lives of the next generations to come.

• (1035)

Ms. Marileen McCormick: I'm going to jump in here for a minute and talk a little bit about rewarding initiative.

One of the issues we've had for generations and generations in the aboriginal community is that people don't see the end results. So often their efforts haven't gone anywhere. As Rhonda alluded to, we do have problems in our programs. It's hard for people to decide to change their lives, to take the time and effort and make all the changes they have to make to be able to go to school and training. Again, you have to look at this in light of the fact that often they haven't seen the rewards. When you see that all of your people are living in poverty, you think you're never going to get out of it.

We're very creative at CAHRD with our programs. We know people can do it; it's keeping them there in the programs to get the education and learn the skills they need. One of the things we tried in one program was to give them a reward for coming to class every day. We found that for as little as \$5 or \$10 a day, topping up their income, whatever they had at the time, made a real difference. If they came to class, they got the money. If they didn't, they didn't get it. We were able to do that without threatening the basic allowance they need to actually live. Most of our people, I'd say 90% of the people we train, are on social assistance, and they stay on social assistance throughout the whole process.

That's one of the things we continue to try to work with the provincial government on, to be more flexible in terms of that allowance and I guess more trusting of the aboriginal community agencies that are working here. I think we could use that to really make a difference in class attendance, in getting people through faster. It's one of the things that we think would be innovative, and we really want to try, and we'd like any kind of support we can get for these efforts.

Ms. Rhonda McCorrison: I just want to reiterate that what successful programs need—

The Chair: Please don't reiterate. I want you to conclude.

Thank you.

Ms. Rhonda McCorrison: Components for successful programs are based on providing the aboriginal community with the community-based programs that need to happen. While we appreciate that there has been help for a long time in many archaic institutions, it doesn't always work. What works is the ability for us to sit down with our community and make a change. We need to reinvest in the head start programs. They haven't had an increase in 11 years. We need to look at the National Indigenous Literacy Association as the arm that's looking at aboriginal literacy. We need to keep empowering the artists to have their own capacity, and provide youth funding and development and capacity-building and infrastructure and capital. We need to be looking at the aboriginal community to take its own lead in making a change, because the evidence has existed for the last 30 years, and more frequently in the last 15 years, that we do in fact have the capacity to build those partnerships ourselves.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

From North End Community Renewal Corporation, we have Ms. McKay.

Ms. Nanette McKay (Executive Director, North End Community Renewal Corporation): Thank you very much for the

opportunity to speak today. I'll just give three seconds of background.

The North End Community Renewal Corporation is one of five—three in the city—renewal corporations in the province. It's an investment the province has made in core funding in a comprehensive strategy. In this part of the world, we talk about community economic development strategies. I know that in Quebec they're referred to as social economy strategies, and some federal programs now are talking about comprehensive community initiatives. The title hardly matters. The significance is that there are programs operating in most urban centres, as well as across the country, that function on a comprehensive basis with a long-term, strategic kind of approach and a high emphasis on community accountability. That's the way we structure our program.

The north end is a population area of about 30,000 people, and the renewal corporation's mandate is social, economic, and cultural renewal, trying to create a holistic response to the whole needs of the community.

Recently, I was at a gathering of about 30 community organizations in the north end and we were making what I would call a federal wish list of all the things we think would help to sustain our neighbourhoods and our communities. These are things that are not being sufficiently addressed or not at all addressed right now. One of the strong themes was youth, so I decided today to use my eight minutes to talk about youth particularly, but also to talk about mechanisms for funding that are effective in communities.

First of all, I want to re-emphasize, ditto, what everyone has said to this point. It saves a lot of time when people are all saying the same thing about the importance of education, resources, and the importance of a comprehensive, complete strategy around funding resources for youth. Several people have spoken to me in the community about the value of an investment in youth as a potential outcome for the gross national product. They're essentially saying that an investment of a dollar in education, in health and wellness for youth, and in preventative measures around safety and crime now amount to significant changes in the costs to the justice system, health care, etc.

I would say youth funding needs to be a priority. It shouldn't be pockets or tiny parcels of funding, but a strategic and holistic response from all levels of government and all departments within each government. Youth is not a single department; it's a crossover issue.

There are primary issues, as others have said, around the culture of poverty. Food and shelter are primary before youths can go on further with education, with improvement in esteem, with employment, etc., so there needs to be an analysis that is deep and wide.

The folks I've been talking to in the last couple of weeks were saying that in some ways, going for federal funding for youth programs is like pretending to be dumb to get a boyfriend. The idea is that one has to pretend that one has never gone for funding before, that this is a new project, a new idea, and that what went before is old and what's coming forward now is original. Our experience with federal funding is that projects are short term and have the illusion that somehow there's going to be some kind of a sustainability plan, and some miraculous funder is going to appear on the horizon to pick up a program that has been funded for one or two years. However, a long view is significant, particularly in this part of the country, where the opportunities to access private funding are severely limited and the level of corporate investment is different from that in some of the major economic centres.

So first of all, youth funding is a priority. Second is comprehensiveness, and not simply looking at youth as a short-term and project-based issue, but looking comprehensively at everything across the board. Third—and I've structured some comments on this already—there is need for a long view.

On the kinds of vehicles that exist that the community is already generating, some of the examples have already been indicated here, but there are others. There are models in place that look at youth as part of the whole picture of community well-being. There are bodies in place to partner with government. There are also structures that government has available to get funds to youth and the resources that will help youth to have a brighter future.

• (1040)

Transfer payments are an important tool for getting resources to youth. The tripartite agreements that exist around housing and health and so forth are very important. And community entities are important, using federal funding structures that allow a community to set the terms, the priorities, and parameters and that allow it to be a part of the accountability structure.

My final point is that federal funding needs to be tied to the community accountability structures. There are many mechanisms that are being tested, and I think we need to admit now that these models are effective, and we need to start using them more, not as pilot or one-off scenarios, but begin to work systematically with these methodologies. The people at this table participate in those models all the time; we do it because we have a level of accountability to community that is very contextual. It's less important that federal projects be the same across the country and more important that they be effective in the communities where they're applied, which requires an ability to know what is going on at our level. We like to participate in those mechanisms allowing that to happen.

I've talked to directors who say they spend 25% to 100% of their time chasing funding. That doesn't seem to be an effective way of getting resources into the community or for working strategically for change.

I've talked to educators in our community who are saying that our graduation rate from high school is still about 22% in the north end. There's no reason that we can't fix that, but it requires a comprehensive and long view.

So we are looking for an analysis of social funding that requires renewability, scalability, and stability. We want to see the federal government working with all levels of government for long-term solutions; we want to see this in the transfer payments and the tripartite structures that you've just put in.

That's all I have. Thanks.

• (1045)

The Chair: Thank you.

From the Swan Lake First Nation, Mr. Daniels.

Chief Robert Daniels (Swan Lake First Nation): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Committee members, I'd like to welcome you to Treaty 1 territory this morning.

I'll read out the text of my presentation or brief.

Swan Lake First Nation is located in south central Manitoba and has approximately 1,100 to 1,150 members. About half live in the community and the other half live in other communities, provinces, or countries.

Our relationship with the imperial Crown was established in 1871 through Treaty 1, through which we opened up millions of acres of land for immigration and settlement. Canada now has the benefits and responsibilities that arise from the treaty.

We share the view of the Standing Committee on Finance that Swan Lake First Nation, as well as other first nations, must share in this new prosperity and begin to experience a better quality of life, and that anything less than that equality is unacceptable.

To date, Swan Lake First Nation has benefited very little, if any, from previous budget announcements on matters relating to health care, healing, education, life-long learning, training, child welfare, early childhood development, youth skills development, housing, land claims, and economic development.

We also concur with the view of the standing committee with regard to the sharing of this new prosperity and this improved quality of life for our first nation, which can be done more effectively under our control and our direction as Swan Lake First Nation.

Swan Lake First Nation has implemented a collective community vision to become a stronger, healthier, unified, independent, and prosperous community over the next 10 years. Our council priorities since being elected to office in December 2004 include but are not limited to: implementing our treaty position and achieving greater accountability back to our first nation from all organizations currently funded on our behalf; promptly settling our outstanding treaty land entitlement settlement agreement and land conversion process, i.e. an expanded land base; paying down our \$2.8 million debt with a five-year consolidated debt repayment plan; exercising collective fiscal management responsibility through our chief and council; implementing our 10-year strategic community improvement plan; strengthening our internal accountability, transparency, and financial disclosure to all of our membership; restructuring and streamlining our internal organization; implementing a direct federal transfer payment through our Canada-first nations funding arrangement, in which we're in our third year; researching and pursuing all of our outstanding land claims; developing our own land management code; transitioning towards a new five-year pilot project for a home ownership program; potentially harnessing wind energy and biomass development within our community; implementing an agricultural diversification strategy; increasing the involvement of our youth and elders; exploring training and employment opportunities for our untapped first nations workforce; and exploring new partnerships or investments for economic development and business opportunities through Swan Lake First Nation enterprises.

While it is understood that the major theme for the pre-budget consultation process is centred on enhancing productivity growth in Canada and on the challenges of raising the living standards of Canadians, productivity must also be measured against first nations sharing in this new prosperity and our people's improved quality of life

Actions are also needed to address our entrepreneurial capital, meaning our first nations businesses; our human capital, or first nations citizens; and also our physical capital, or first nations communities.

Our views on taxation, program spending, and the other policy changes needed to enhance first nations productivity performance must also be heard and considered, given the significant difference in the demographic make-up of our first nations communities and the larger population, particularly as previous major spending priorities have gone toward taking care of the mainstream aging population, rather than our ever-increasing child and youth population.

● (1050)

In particular, any new funding programs and policy changes must respect the rights and governance concerns of Swan Lake First Nation; be delivered within the context of our treaty, our treaty rights, and our treaty relationship; be sufficiently flexible to meet the diverse needs of Swan Lake First Nation; and permit funding allocations that reflect our total population, as well as the size and dual rural and urban nature of our first nation, which is about a 50-50 population split on and off reserve.

There is something terribly wrong in that no matter how much money is provided, it is not getting to where the problem is. The

whole funding relationship has to be changed, and we can go back to the treaty for an idea about how to do this.

Treaty No. 1 of 1871 was a document about sharing. The understanding was that the sharing would be reciprocal. As a down payment, we were offered \$3, later increased to \$5 per person in 1876 dollars, and that is the amount we are still receiving today. That amount was to cover the interest on the income from the sale of the lands for immigration and settlement, just as had been the case in eastern Canada at that time. That was an exchange in which we gave up lands that sustained our lives and fed our children in exchange for payment in comparable value. Instead, for its own political reasons, the Government of Canada gave our lands away. It has never paid for those lands to this day. That is why we have the problems we have now.

At the time of treaty, there was never any intention on the part of the first nations nor on the part of the government that we would ever become dependent upon the taxpayer. We would survive on our own resources, as we always had done over the centuries, except that we would have money for economic development to replace the settled land. The poverty that our people live in today can be traced back to the government's failure to keep that simple promise. All of it is well documented in the archives.

Still, today, if the government were to keep that promise and share with us the benefits of our lands and resources, we would be able to live at a standard of living similar to that of Canadians. The Supreme Court of Canada has guaranteed that to us in the Marshall case. The Constitution of Canada guarantees it to us. Our treaty guarantees it to us. Taxpayers have been left on the hook because other parties are benefiting from our share of our resources.

I'd like to thank you for listening to our presentation this morning. We also have a few recommendations that we'd like to make to the standing committee.

We would like to recommend that the Standing Committee on Finance acknowledge and support the Swan Lake First Nation's treaty position, our community vision, and our mission and value statements. We'd also like the committee to champion and advocate for an undertaking of a full Treaty No. 1 audit to calculate the interest on the income from the sale of lands for immigration and settlement still owed to Swan Lake First Nation.

If Canada had fulfilled its treaty obligations from the beginning, it would not be necessary for first nations to require the federal funding that's there now for programs and services. Support the full payment to Swan Lake First Nation for the lands that were taken and given away to settlers at the time of treaty. We're also asking the standing committee to campaign and support the need for a full treaty implementation and full access to all our resources and revenues as promised in Treaty No. 1 of 1871 for Swan Lake First Nation.

We're also asking the committee to speak up and endorse the writing off of the outstanding debt currently being paid by the Swan Lake First Nation, a debt that has been created by the federal government's underfunding.

We also ask the committee to support and put into effect Swan Lake First Nation direct funding from all federal funding from all federal departments, through our Canada-first nations funding arrangement. We're in our third year of that funding arrangement.

We'd like the committee to assist the Swan Lake First Nation in being reinstated for the lost income and for all the lost opportunities resulting from the delays in conversion of treaty land entitlement settlement lands to reserve status. Also, we'd like the committee to issue special first nations investment bonds for Canadian individuals and companies to invest their moneys, and use this money to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

In regard to settling outstanding claims, there are 700 claims sitting on the minister's desk right now, of which only 12 or so will be settled this year, but 60 new claims will come in this year. Be sure that the specific claims in Indian Affairs and the Department of Justice are given sufficient resources to make the claims system work.

•(1055)

Give the Indian Claims Commission sufficient funding so that it can fulfill its mandate. Almost automatically accept the recommendations of the commission, rather than putting them through costly processing and second-guessing.

And lastly, do not litigate everything. There are over 300 suits against Canada in the court system right now. Think what this costs the federal government. Think what this costs the first nations to seek a settlement.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Daniels.

Ms. McKay, before I forget, we didn't get your submission. Did you submit one?

Ms. Nanette McKay: I provided something today.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

From the Chemawawin Cree Nation, we have Mr. Easter.

Chief Clarence Easter (Chemawawin Cree Nation): Good morning.

[Witness speaks in his native language]

My name is Clarence Easter, and I've been the chief for Chemawawin Cree Nation for the past 11 years. I'd like to thank the chair and the members of the Standing Committee on Finance for this opportunity to express my views today.

The budget represents priorities, plans, an allocation of resources to realize your vision and your goals as you see them. I'll provide an overview of our people and concerns, explore a new relationship with Canada and the relevance of budgets, and give a concluding observation.

Chemawawin Cree Nation is Treaty No. 5, located 500 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg, up Highway 6. The on-reserve population is about 1,189, with 266 living off reserve.

We have a proud tradition of economic self-reliance. Before 1964, people had social and economic structures in place. After 1964, hydro development happened at Grand Rapids and changed everything. People started to move away from the social structures and the economic structures they had, and now they have become more dependent on government programs. To change that, we require collaboration with and commitment from Canada, Manitoba, and ourselves as people.

We were uprooted and we were relocated to a new location. People didn't know what to do there. Social structures were damaged to a point at which we're now starting to rebuild those. Children who grow up to be adults don't know what to do. They're told to go to elementary school, high school. By the time they get to grade 12, they still don't know what to do. They go to university wondering what they're going to university for. You see that a lot, and the results you see are in the city, because kids are moving into the city.

That's unlike where we came from, where children knew what they were going to do when they grew up. They had that social structure that they followed. By the time you're 10 years old, you need to do certain things. By the time you're 15, you need to do certain things. By the time you're 20, you need to have certain things to do. We don't have that any more. We've lost that.

The economic structures were also damaged. By the time you were 12 years old, you were taught how to work, where to work, when to go to work, and when you got paid. Those were taught back then, but now there's nothing. We need to start working on those issues and bring them back to our communities.

We have a growing community. The majority of our population is under 24 years of age, so we have a very young community. We need to start building on that. I do believe that as Canadians our national vision and philosophy place upon us a moral, political, and social duty to do something about these issues that affect us, not only in my community of Chemawawin, but everywhere else in Canada as well.

•(1100)

We employ a lot of people, and we have an employment rate of 80% in the summer. We employ all of our students; if you're 15 and over, we employ you. We want to create the opportunities and quality of life that were there before, without their having to leave home. We want to develop the social structures that were lost. We want to develop the economic opportunities as well that were there before but are not there now. We need to establish the businesses and social environment to instill confidence in our people, as well as taking into consideration the culture that affects us today, the other citizens in Canada.

To attain our capacity and the resources needed to govern, we need to make those decisions ourselves. We need to be able to decide what we're going to do. We want to do our part—and we are going to do our part. In the past we made some development initiatives with the Province of Manitoba and the federal government in the areas of forestry, fishery, education, and health. We are going to change the way health is being delivered in our community and we're also going to change the way education is being delivered, as well as making changes in the curriculum that's being delivered.

We had some preliminary negotiations to attract an ethanol plant to Beausejour. We had some preliminary negotiations with Health Canada, INAC, the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, Parks Canada and Canada Economic Development. We have an agreement with Manitoba Hydro on environmental monitoring programs, because they use our lake as a reservoir for the Grand Rapids generating station; so in the contract with Manitoba Hydro, we have an agreement to look at the environmental effects the lake has on fisheries, the shoreline, and all the areas that affect our resources.

We have also been involved in international dealings and ongoing negotiations to be able to construct a manufacturing plant in Chemawawin to build caskets. I went to China and Italy to pursue having somebody come in to do that in Chemawawin. But the problem we keep running into is that we don't have the authority to say, yes, you can come in and establish a processing or manufacturing plant in Chemawawin, because we have to go through the federal government. We need to explore a new relationship with Canada so that we can provide these services, as well as with the provincial government, because we don't have the necessary resources and the tax base to be able to accommodate all the things we require. We act as an initiator and facilitator of economic development. We need to create some sort of relationship between yourselves, meaning a relationship between the Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba in our case.

Changing demographics in our community necessitate structures and resources to accommodate the changes in the demand for services. If our birth rates are 10% and 80 kids are being born every year, and you're only building 10 units of housing—and sometimes you miss a year and only build 10 units in two years—then the next four years you're going to have at least 300 or 400 people to house. Where are you going to put them?

• (1105)

We need to establish those priorities, and that's why I'm here today.

The budget reflects the political and social priorities of the nation as articulated by Parliament and government. It's a communication tool; it also provides us with communication. We need to establish a new relationship outside the Indian Act. We need multi-year funding, and we need to have a treaty-based relationship with Canada.

We will do our part in communicating to our people about what is going on with our negotiations with the federal government, but we need to establish that relationship and a partnership between the Government of Canada and Manitoba.

There is a need to consider multi-year funding, to include all departments, and to have one agreement. We need a partnership between Canada and Chemawawin to provide economic, political, and social development for future generations.

Thank you very much for taking the opportunity to listen to me.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Easter.

Members, we'll have a five-minute question and answer session.

I just want to remind the witnesses it is five minutes for questions and answers, so if you could keep your answers to a brief intervention, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Thank you for coming to present to us. I found it very interesting. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of time.

Let me just say that I'm very pleased to hear about the initiatives to bring aboriginals into the workforce. I had the pleasure of working with many aboriginal people when I was in the mining industry, before my accident. Interestingly, it was people of aboriginal descent who pulled me out of the ditch at my accident, so I certainly owe the community a great deal.

I'm the health critic for the Conservative Party, so I'm particularly interested in areas around health in the aboriginal community. It's one of the areas where the federal government plays a direct role in the delivery of health care for first nations people.

As we know, unfortunately, the federal government has done a profoundly poor job in assisting people on first nations with health concerns. One area where we might be able to improve is to have people of aboriginal descent acquire the education and medical background that is necessary to provide the health care services for first nations people.

You gave some examples of training opportunities and success that you've had in the trades and diagnostics, but I wonder if any of the panel members can suggest what we can do to get more people of aboriginal descent to become doctors, specialists, nurses, and physiotherapists—all the things we are sadly lacking right across the country but that are beyond acute in first nation communities.

• (1110)

Ms. Rhonda McCorrison: Thank you.

I think we also offer training—LPNs. Again, I need to go back to the access program and the access model. There is opportunity to provide university education in a ladder model. If we could do things like some of the college prep so that people have some skills, they could ladder into university later.

The AHRDA agreement, which is the human resource development agreement, is a skills development and training initiative. It's amazing, but I think to access university-level education requires more than just an access model; it requires a continuing partnership of college, skill development, and university. There seems to be some kind of barrier out there that we're not sure of. If it's more than two years, it's not skills development any more and therefore it doesn't qualify for a lot of the training and skills development.

There is a lot of opportunity, including building opportunities within communities to train their own. There is technology—moving things up north through teleconference, through providing communities with the opportunity to do their own nursing station training. There are those kinds of things. There are all kinds of those opportunities that we'd like to work on in collaboration with the government.

But the most important thing I think is that if you want people to be doctors and nurses in our communities, we need early years intervention. We need skills training so that our parents can raise their kids understanding quality of life, so that their children will want to become the doctors and nurses of tomorrow.

Mr. Steven Fletcher: I guess what you're saying is, if you're living in poverty, it's tough to think about if you want to be an anesthesiologist. Point well taken.

Mr. Daniels, you've talked a lot about treaties and obligations. One fundamental aspect to the economy or our way of life in the west is the ability to own private property. I understand that if you live and have a home on a first nation reserve, you don't actually own the home.

We know from centuries of experience that when someone owns their own property, they're more likely to invest in that property and take care of it. Also, a home, for anyone except for aboriginal people, is probably the largest investment any of us will make. It's a great way of building up equity and creating wealth and passing wealth on from one generation to the other.

That opportunity seems not to be there for too many people of aboriginal descent. I wonder if you have any comments on property rights.

Chief Robert Daniels: Thank you very much, Mr. Fletcher.

In response to your question regarding private home ownership or private property, I can say Swan Lake First Nation is actually one of the two first nations in Manitoba that's in the process of putting together our own land management code—over the next two years. One of those is private property ownership and so on. We also have a proposal with the federal government right now for home ownership, where we're trying to maximize on the dollars in terms of having home ownership in our community.

We've already started with the existing homes, where we've transferred the homes to private home ownership already. There are about twenty homes in Swan Lake that are owned by members. It's not attached to the land per se, but they own the homes now. The proposal we have is to try to maximize on the labour portion of the construction so it's truly affordable, so people can actually own their own homes. That's a pilot project we're working on as well.

As far as the private property issue goes, that's one of the areas we're going to address in the land management code. I believe there are about 19 first nations that are under the land management code across Canada. We're in our first year of putting together this code for Swan Lake.

Mr. Steven Fletcher: So you would agree that the ability to own your own home and private property would be one of many vehicles that would be necessary to help in long-term prosperity for first nations people.

•(1115)

Chief Robert Daniels: The land itself will still be held in common for the reserve, for Swan Lake First Nation, but we would look at options, for example, long-term home site leases attached to the home itself. It's the home they will be owning. There are ways of doing that as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Daniels.

I need to have some discipline here because we're going to go way over on time here. We have five panels and we have to keep the questions and answers to five minutes when I have the microphone on.

Monsieur Bouchard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you all for your excellent presentations.

While listening to you, I notice that your situation is similar to the one we have in Quebec. I come from an area where aboriginal communities are established. These communities took part in a negotiation with the Quebec and federal governments. It was then termed as a common approach which was the basis for an agreement between the three parties, that is the first nations, the Quebec government and the federal government. The agreement may eventually give rise to a treaty. What you have described is somewhat similar to the situation we have at home.

My first question is to the North End Community Renewal Corporation. You talked about youth and about their contribution to the gross national product. I understand you feel very strongly that the issue of youth should be considered.

Do you think we should give a higher priority to helping young people than to other groups because they represent our future?

[*English*]

Ms. Nanette McKay: I'm not sure "priority" is the language we use in any kind of exclusive way in the community where we work, but a significant location for youth in an overall strategy for community development is significant and important. The issue for youth is first of all representation. Young people are very often excluded from being able to determine programming that would best suit them. Second, programs for youth often get couched with another program. I think the priority is to first of all give access to youth for them to actually be a part of the process of setting an agenda that does direct programs to them. Also, alongside development, we have departments for housing and we have departments for health, but we don't have a place where youth can draw together all of their concerns cohesively.

I don't think in terms of percentages, but I do think that we are in danger, with the state of baby boomers in the country, of losing track of the fact that there are young people in crisis who are expected to sustain that population. We need to be considering preventative and opportunity-based strategies for youth, because ultimately they will be left carrying a population but will not have the resources, the education, the opportunities, or the employment necessary. I would say it needs to be a really strong position in a broad-based strategy for the economy.

•(1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: You talked about a comprehensive and integrated approach. I also understand you are deeply concerned because federal funding programs are all too often focused on the short-term. You said you wanted longer-term programs to be implemented.

I believe you think short-term programs are less effective. Do you know of any past programs that had very good outcomes?

[*English*]

Ms. Nanette McKay: I'm relatively young myself, so I don't have a broad grasp of federal programming over the decades. I have certainly heard that there were eras when the targeting and approach of federal funding were more comprehensive. But I'll speak to some current examples where we're experiencing some positive results. One of them in Manitoba is the Winnipeg housing and homelessness initiative. It has a community-based entity and a tripartite of directed resources. A number of people at this table sit on the fund allocation committee that works from a community-based plan and set of priorities.

So there are presently models that allow the community to set a long-term agenda, set priorities, be accountable for those priorities, and be accountable for longer-term results. There is still work to be done on that model, but I think it's not a bad model to be considered for the way moneys come generally.

I also think there's a lot of potential in the transfer payments model. We spend a lot more time arguing about who gets how much, instead of what the outcomes are intended to be and how community accountable the results from transfer payments are. The federal government could play a lead in the transfer payments model, setting agendas with communities so they are part of determining how those dollars get spent at a more local level.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McKay.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank everyone for various presentations on the whole theme of economic development and addressing long-standing grievances, especially with the first nations and aboriginal communities.

I wish Lloyd Axworthy had been able to stay, because he made a very important point. I don't know if you picked it up; I certainly hope you and Mark did. He basically said that the present government's focus on debt reduction and tax cuts is wrong and does not allow the flexibility needed to address the very issues the folks here are talking about and the legitimate concerns they are raising.

I've only got a few minutes. I'm going to start by asking Nanette McKay about her model, the North End Community Renewal Corporation. I want to raise this not just because it happens to be in my constituency and I know the ins and outs of this group, but because it works. It is a model that does what everyone here is saying. It works from the ground up. It's not the heavy hand of government with its patronizing approach saying it knows what's

best for the community. It is a proposal that says we need long-term, sustained funding, instead of all these short-term grants and boutique programs. It is a proposal that actually treats the community as a whole, instead of compartmentalizing all the different aspects we hear about.

In fact, Mr. Chair, if you listened to the news last night and heard the Governor General's statement at a school in the heart of the north end about giving hope and preventing more Kathleen Beardys from committing suicide, it is precisely this kind of proposal that she and others want to see supported.

My question to Nanette is, how do we make the case, as a committee, to convince the government that instead of continually focusing on tax cuts for corporations, to put money into community development concepts, community economic development proposals, that actually make a difference, that deal with problems on a long-term, lasting basis?

•(1125)

Ms. Nanette McKay: Brevity, right?

The North End Community Renewal Corporation model is first of all non-profit, and therefore membership and community accountable. It is a geographic model in our case, with a defined area. Some models, such as the aboriginal centre one, are culturally based and somewhat geographically based—secondarily perhaps.

Part of it is being able to define your community and be accountable to your community. Part of it is having the partnership for core funding that allows a development approach rather than a program approach, so we're not only fighting for our next dollar, but we're also able to attend to strategy. Part of that is long-term planning and being able to demonstrate a community engagement that is broad-based.

Another piece of that is having an outcomes basis where the organization and the community set agendas in the long term that measure community results, such as employment, training, business development, etc. I think that model could be employed more.

I know the federal government spoke of interest in a social economy model, which is a parallel, but didn't manage to prioritize the funding to make that model go forward. I would encourage attention to that kind of a strategy that involves research, capacity-building, and sustainable funding for comprehensive models. That's really what we need to see.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Do I have any more time, Mr. Chairperson?

The Chair: One minute.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: I think the other part of this problem—and the other part of the solution—is long-term, sustained funding through the Canada social transfer. I'm wondering if you could tell us how much time you, or organizations in your area, spend applying for all of these different short-term programs and boutique projects that you could be putting into enhancing your programs that meet real needs if those programs were there on a long-term, sustained funding basis?

Ms. Nanette McKay: As a large organization, we spend probably 25% of our time, but that's because we have some core funding and resources. We are a million-dollar-plus organization, so we have a structure. In smaller organizations that have funding in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 range, the directors say they spend all their time.

Ms. Rhonda McCorrison: In response to that, chasing the dollar is a huge issue and there needs to be some balance. While we need some long-term funding for successful things that basically already exist, we also need to keep in mind the lessons learned series that the Liberal government did through HRDC. They said very clearly that it has to be community.

There are far too many institutions that have been around forever that are failing the aboriginal community because they think they know our model or they think they know that it's all about culture and they try to duplicate that, or whatever. We need to be accountable and responsible for our own. While we do spend a lot of time chasing dollars, and we would like to see longer-term core funding, we also need to very clearly say there are innovative community-based models that need to be supported so that we can take responsibility and accountability for our own.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Wasylycia-Leis.

Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): I recognize, Mr. Chairman, that we have a very limited amount of time. I think we have about five or six minutes before we're supposed to begin the next session. Perhaps I'll limit mine to one question, and Ms. Smith and I can split the time that's there.

I think there's one key point, and we're not going to get a chance to fully explore it right now. Obviously the issues that are facing the first nations community are very diverse, and the solutions have to be as well.

I was struck by the dichotomy of two comments—one by Mr. Axworthy and one later by Mr. Easter—and both of them I totally believe to be true. The comment by Mr. Axworthy was that when first nations and aboriginal students graduate, the rate of employment is equal to that of other graduates. Yet we also heard from Mr. Easter that many students say, why bother going through this? I think that is a real problem—that sense of hopelessness, the sense that they're not going to have that opportunity—when the reality is if they can make it through, it's going to be there for them. I think there are a lot of underlying issues in that, and obviously the conditions from which they're coming play a huge role.

If we could do one thing, one major priority that you could pick out to address that... And it's not just for youth. Somebody else mentioned that it's extremely important for adults to be given the

skills and ability to be able to contribute as well, because then their children see the hope and confidence that comes from that.

What is the one thing that each of you would recommend we do?

• (1130)

Ms. Rhonda McCorrison: Maybe I'll do that first.

I believe the AHRDA carve-out model is the way to address early years, head start, and literacy. There needs to be a specific carve-out for aboriginal communities to have their own capacity to deliver their own programs. Again, evidence of that is the lessons learned model. When communities are given the resources and opportunity to deliver their own, it works. I think the National Indigenous Literacy Association, the AHRDA, and all those things are what we need to have happen.

Give it to the communities.

Chief Robert Daniels: I think one of the priorities in terms of youth and unemployment is to break that cycle of dependency, the whole training gear cycle, I call it, where they go from training to training to training just for the sake of training, and never get out of the cycle.

We ran a pre-employment training program from 1995 to 1997, where we had 60 graduates out of our 60 students. It gave 26- to 34-week pre-employment training to get people off social assistance and into the workforce. We found that at least 80% of the people in that program needed major investment to get them off the dependency cycle. Another about 15% needed just minor investment to get them into the job-ready stage, and less than 5% of our youth were actually job-ready.

When we ran the pre-employment training program, we had over 300 applications for that program to continue. The funders of that program said, after I think the fourth intake, "From now on you're going to have to find your own funding for half of your intake". So we shut it down. We said, "We're not going to spend time chasing money around, because our time is devoted to the classroom and job readiness and work placement and getting them into higher education". That's what the government does: when something succeeds, they shut it down and say, "Now you have to find your own resources".

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Easter, just quickly.

Chief Clarence Easter: I would recommend a tiered funding arrangement so that they could have a coordinated approach to each program, with better planning and better service delivery.

The Chair: Ms. McCormick.

Ms. Marileen McCormick: I would support everything that's come from around the table. Specifically, we need to look at holistic integrated programming, where you work with early childhood education, you work with youth, and you work with the parents.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McCormick.

Thank you, Mr. Holland.

Ms. Smith, five minutes.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Just very quickly, because I know we're running overtime, I want to thank you for all your presentations. Clearly there are some real challenges that we have to be paying very close attention to.

Rhonda, I was really interested—being an educator for 22 years—when you were talking about targeted investments in adult education to break that cycle of poverty so that people have a vision of where they want to be. That's learned opportunity. I taught in a very inner-city school environment, and a lot of the students and parents themselves did not understand where they could go.

Could you comment on that, please?

• (1135)

Ms. Rhonda McCorrison: Certainly. At the aboriginal centre we do have a head start program. We also have Kookum's Place, which is our day care centre. When we work with families, and we work especially with young, single women who have babies, we see a dramatic difference in the way those babies are raised. Those children grow up to say that they have further interest in becoming the same thing. In fact, we graduated one woman as a power engineer. Both her twin daughters, shortly behind her, came through and became power engineers too. Those kinds of things wouldn't happen without developing the parents.

It's about literacy, getting our parents to take responsibility, getting our kids in there every day, getting school-ready, learning about careers, so that our children never, ever have to suffer what poverty is. They don't remember poverty. By the time they're six or seven and their parents are well on their way with good jobs at \$12 or \$14 an hour, those children have no idea what poverty is. Even more important, you've broken the cycle. They now say, "When I grow up and I start working..."

So they start seeing a lifestyle of work and labour force engagement as opposed to being at home, and parents being at home, saying, "What's the use?", with that whole sense of hopelessness in thinking it doesn't matter what your education level is, there are no opportunities anyway.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you for that.

Would anyone else on the panel like to comment on that?

Clarence, I know you were talking about very much the same thing, that the youth did not know what to do or what goals they should be achieving because the foundation wasn't there. Perhaps you could comment further on that.

Chief Clarence Easter: A lot of people in the community don't want to get further education because they don't want to leave home. All of the opportunities are outside the community. If you want to

get further education, you have to go away. If you want to be a doctor, you have to go to Winnipeg, for example. If you want to be a lawyer, you have to be in the city. So why would you want to be a lawyer if you're going to be at home?

Mrs. Joy Smith: That is exactly something we've been addressing as the Conservative Party, in conjunction with provincial authorities. Offering choice in schooling to first nations people would be part of that package, and you've just endorsed that idea. I was very interested in what you said this morning in that regard, because it shows we're on the right track there.

I want to ask Chief Daniels a question as well. Our party does support the development of a property regime that would encourage lending for private housing and businesses and promote economic opportunity and individual freedom. We'd like to create a first nations land ownership act that would transfer reserve land titles from the federal Crown to willing first nations. In your presentation this morning you were talking about a lot of issues centred around that. Your presentation was very concise, from the settlement of outstanding claims to advocating the undertaking of a full Treaty No. 1 audit to calculate the interest on the income from the sale of lands for immigration and settlement still owed to Swan Lake First Nation.

It seems to me that a lot of thought and a lot of planning has been put in by the Swan Lake First Nation itself, very self-sustaining. Could you further comment on this aspect? Your time had run out, and I'd like you to have a little bit more airtime.

Chief Robert Daniels: Thank you very much.

When we got elected in December, the priority was to get our treaty land entitlement settlement agreements settled. We purchased all of our lands required under the TLE, and that cost us a considerable amount of money—over \$2 million in taxes and legal fees and so on, and about \$40 million in lost opportunities. A treaty obligation, a legal obligation, a constitutional obligation hasn't been met, and we have to satisfy third-party interests and so on.

If we had those lands set aside as reserve, we would be able to pursue our economic development, our priorities, in terms of our community. Right now we have a \$2.8 million debt that we inherited, and a lot of that is because of underfunding. If Canada forgives debt to Third World countries, why can't we do that to first nations if there's debt owing? We could start with a clean slate. And that's what we're looking for, to be able to be on an equal footing.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Smith.

I'm sorry, but we're running over our time here. We have another group that we have to try to get in.

Again, thank you for your patience, and thank you for taking time out of your day. That was an interesting presentation.

The meeting is adjourned.

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