

**ADDRESS FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE REPORT OF THE  
ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

WE BELIEVE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN CANADA MUST CHANGE. WE BELIEVE IT CAN. THE CYCLE OF BLAME AND GUILT; GRIEVANCE AND DENIAL; FRUSTRATION AND FEAR CAN BE BROKEN. IT IS TIME TO RENEW, TO TURN THE PAGE.

IT DOES NOT BEFIT THIS GREAT DEMOCRACY, A PLACE THAT PRIDES ITSELF ON ITS COMPASSION, ITS RESPECT FOR RIGHTS AND THE LAW, TO PERPETUATE WITHIN ITS MIDST -- AND THROUGHOUT MOST OF ITS HISTORY -- A SYSTEMATIC DISREGARD FOR THE CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE THAT FIRST ALLOWED THIS COUNTRY TO COME INTO EXISTENCE.

NOT ONLY DOES THIS NOT BEFIT THIS COUNTRY.

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO ALLOW THE PRESENT SITUATION TO PERSIST.

THE LEGACY OF CANADA'S TREATMENT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IS ONE OF WASTE: WASTED POTENTIAL, WASTED MONEY, WASTED LIVES.

IT IS MEASURED IN STATISTIC AFTER STATISTIC: IN THE RATES OF SUICIDE; OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE; OF INCARCERATION; OF UNEMPLOYMENT; OF WELFARE DEPENDENCE; OF LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT; OF POOR HEALTH AND POOR HOUSING.

ABORIGINAL REALITY IN CANADA HAS BECOME A VICIOUS CIRCLE OF CAUSE AND EFFECT. IF THAT VICIOUS CIRCLE IS TO BECOME A HEALING CIRCLE, THE ROOTS OF INJUSTICE MUST BE ADDRESSED. INSTEAD OF PROBLEM FEEDING PROBLEM, SOLUTION MUST FEED SOLUTION.

THE ROOTS OF INJUSTICE LIE IN HISTORY AND IT IS THERE WHERE THE KEY TO THE REGENERATION OF ABORIGINAL SOCIETY AND A NEW AND BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REST OF CANADA CAN BE FOUND.



ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WERE NATIONS BEFORE THE FIRST EUROPEAN SETTLERS ARRIVED. THEY WERE NATIONS, AND RECOGNIZED AS SUCH, IN THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION OF 1763 WHICH CONFIRMED AND CODIFIED THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES. THEY WERE NATIONS, AND RECOGNIZED AS SUCH, WHEN THEY SIGNED TREATIES TO SHARE THEIR LAND AND RESOURCES.

AND THEY REMAIN NATIONS TODAY -- IN THEIR COHERENCE, THEIR DISTINCTIVENESS AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD. THERE WAS NO CONQUEST, NO GIVING UP OF RIGHTS. WHAT THERE WAS, WAS A PARTNERSHIP, EXPRESSED IN LAW, EMBEDDED IN OUR HISTORY.

THE SYSTEMATIC, SUSTAINED DENIAL OF THIS REALITY -- MANIFESTED THROUGH THE VIOLATION OF AGREEMENTS, THE SUPPRESSION OF CULTURES AND INSTITUTIONS, THE REFUSAL TO LIVE UP TO LEGAL OBLIGATIONS -- IS THE CORE OF THE PROBLEM.

SETTLER GOVERNMENTS, IMBUED WITH THE CERTAINTY OF AN IMPERIAL AGE, SOUGHT DOMINION OVER THIS LAND AND BELIEVED IT WAS THEIR DUTY TO REMAKE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND SOCIETIES IN THEIR OWN IMAGE, THEREBY, CONVENIENTLY, REMOVING OPPOSITION TO THAT DOMINION.

WE CANNOT ESCAPE THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BUILT A GREAT LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN PART THROUGH THE DISPOSSESSION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND THE IMPOSITION OF OUR CULTURAL NORMS.

SUCCESSIVE CANADIAN GOVERNMENTS TRIED -- OFTEN INTENTIONALLY, SOMETIMES IN IGNORANCE -- TO ABSORB ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AS *INDIVIDUALS* INTO THE BODY OF CANADIAN SOCIETY, THUS SEEKING TO ELIMINATE DISTINCTIVE ABORIGINAL SOCIETIES. SUCH POLICIES, PURSUED OVER THE DECADES, UNDERMINED -- AND ALMOST ERASED -- ABORIGINAL CULTURES AND PERSONAL IDENTITIES. BUT THEY DID NOT SUCCEED. ABORIGINAL PEOPLES REMAIN PROUDLY DIFFERENT.

THE FACT IS THAT IN CRUCIAL DIMENSIONS, ABORIGINAL CULTURES, VALUES AND WORLD-VIEWS WERE -- AND REMAIN -- FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES OF MAINSTREAM NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY. YET ABORIGINAL PEOPLES HAVE BEEN DENIED THE RIGHT TO FASHION THEIR SOCIETIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN WAYS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THESE VALUES.

CANADIANS ARE NOW EMBARRASSED BY THE ARROGANCE THAT RUNS THROUGH OUR HISTORY AND BY THE ACTS OF STATE SUPPRESSION THAT IT GAVE RISE TO: THE INDIAN ACT IN ALL ITS PERMUTATIONS, THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS, THE FREQUENT RELOCATION OF WHOLE COMMUNITIES, THE NEGATION OF TREATY COMMITMENTS.

YET THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS HAVE NOT DIED. ALTHOUGH POSITIVE CHANGE HAS OCCURRED, TOO MANY STILL SEE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AS AN UNFORTUNATE MINORITY WHO ONLY NEED BETTER EDUCATION AND BETTER TOOLS TO TAKE THEIR PLACE ALONGSIDE THE MAJORITY, HAVING ADOPTED THE MAJORITY'S VALUES.

GOVERNMENTS ARE LOATHE TO GIVE UP CONTROL. THERE IS STILL A DEEP RELUCTANCE TO STAND BACK SO THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES CAN ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEMSELVES AND TO EXERCISE THE FULL RANGE OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY THAT RESPONSIBILITY REQUIRES.

IN ORDER TO BREAK FREE OF THE STRUCTURE OF DEPENDENCE WHICH HAS BRED SO MUCH DEPRIVATION AND DESPONDENCY, ABORIGINAL PEOPLE MUST HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AND RESOURCES TO EXERCISE RESPONSIBILITY THEMSELVES, TO RE-ESTABLISH THEMSELVES AS PEOPLES, TO BUILD INSTITUTIONS CONSISTENT WITH THEIR VALUES.

THEY SHOULD ENGAGE IN THIS PROCESS AT WHATEVER SPEED THEY WISH. THAT IS THEIR RIGHT -- AND IT IS THE ONLY APPROACH THAT WILL WORK.

THE TERMS OF REFERENCE THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA THROUGH THE ADVICE OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE BRIAN DICKSON SET FOR THIS COMMISSION WERE AMBITIOUS -- REFLECTING THE DEPTH OF THE CHALLENGE THIS COUNTRY HAS YET TO MEET.

WE WERE GIVEN AN UNPRECEDENTED MANDATE. AND WE EMBARKED UPON AN UNPRECEDENTED PROCESS.

WE CRISS-CROSSED THE COUNTRY, OFTEN WORKING IN THREE SEPARATE TEAMS. BY THE END OF 1993, WE HAD VISITED 96 COMMUNITIES, HELD 178 DAYS OF HEARINGS, HEARD BRIEFS FROM 2067 PEOPLE AND ACCUMULATED MORE THAN 76,000 PAGES OF TESTIMONY.

THE POWER OF THE MESSAGES -- UNFILTERED, FORTHRIGHT, CONFIDENTLY EXPRESSED IN COMMUNITY SURROUNDINGS -- WAS EXTRAORDINARY.

MOREOVER, WE COMMISSIONED OVER 350 RESEARCH PROJECTS.

TODAY, WE PUT BEFORE GOVERNMENTS AND THE COUNTRY, THE CONCLUSIONS OF OUR EFFORTS.

FROM THE BEGINNING, OUR FOCUS WAS ON ANSWERS, ON WHAT COULD WORK.

WE HAVE PROPOSED A TIME LINE, A SEQUENCE, BY WHICH MEANINGFUL CHANGE CAN TAKE PLACE, BEARING IN MIND BOTH THE NEED FOR MAJOR CHANGE AND A RECOGNITION THAT SUCH MAJOR CHANGE CANNOT BE ACCOMPLISHED OVER NIGHT.

WE HAVE PROVIDED AN EVALUATION OF THE COSTS INVOLVED, WHERE RELEVANT, BASED ON REALISTIC ANALYSIS.

AND WE HAVE DRAWN TOGETHER THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHANGE INTO AN INTEGRATED, OVERALL STRATEGY.

SINCE THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM, THIS COMMISSION IS THE FIRST TO ADDRESS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PEOPLES WHO MAKE UP THE COUNTRY. IN THAT SENSE, OUR REPORT GOES TO THE FABRIC OF WHAT CANADA IS AND COULD BE, INCORPORATING THE VIEWS, EXPERIENCES AND WISDOM OF THOUSANDS OF CANADIANS.

ITS MANDATE AND CREATION WERE SUPPORTED BY ALL PARTIES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN 1991 AND WE ARE PLEASED THAT ITS WORK HAS REMAINED ABOVE PARTISAN CONFLICT.

OUR REPORT PROPOSES A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY OVER 20 YEARS TO RESTORE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL HEALTH TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLES -- AND REBUILD THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL CANADIANS.

IT ENTAILS THE PURSUIT OF TWO MUTUALLY REINFORCING PATHS TO CHANGE -- REBALANCING POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES; AND A REINFORCING EFFORT TO RESTORE HEALTH AND EFFECTIVENESS TO INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND NATIONS.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPTS ON WHICH THIS STRATEGY RESTS.

THERE ARE FOUR: THE REALITY OF SOCIETAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE; THE RIGHT TO SELF-GOVERNMENT; THE NATURE OF ABORIGINAL NATIONHOOD; AND THE REQUIREMENT FOR ADEQUATE LAND, RESOURCES AND SELF-RELIANT ABORIGINAL ECONOMIES. EACH IS LINKED TO THE OTHERS AND ALL ARE CRITICAL FOR SUCCESS.

LET US BEGIN WITH THE QUESTION OF SOCIETAL VALUES AND WORLD VIEWS, SOMETHING OUR REPORT EXAMINES IN DETAIL. WE WANT TO NOTE TWO OF THESE DIFFERENCES.

- FIRST, THE COMMUNITY AND THE COLLECTIVE PLAY A VERY LARGE ROLE IN THE ABORIGINAL INDIVIDUAL'S SENSE OF IDENTITY. HE OR SHE IS UNLIKELY TO BE COMFORTABLE WITH THE INDIVIDUALISM THAT MANY EURO-CANADIANS TAKE PRIDE IN. IF HIS CULTURE IS Demeaned, IF HIS HISTORY IS DISMISSED, IF HIS COMMUNITY IS DYSFUNCTIONAL, HE WILL FIND HIS SENSE OF IDENTITY ERODED AND HIS CAPACITY TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IMPAIRED. THROUGHOUT CANADA'S HISTORY, ATTEMPTS TO DEPRIVE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF THEIR COMMUNAL STRENGTH HAS BEEN A CONSISTENT THEME. THE RESTORATION AND GATHERING TOGETHER OF THAT STRENGTH IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF ANY SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY.

- SECONDLY, ABORIGINAL APPROACHES TO GOVERNANCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION DEPART IN MANY WAYS FROM THE PRACTICES OF MAINSTREAM SOCIETY. INVOLVEMENT OF THE FAMILY AND THE CLAN ARE NECESSARY FOR A SENSE OF LEGITIMACY. CLANS ARE OFTEN EXCLUDED FROM A ROLE IN DECISION-MAKING IN A SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATION WHERE THE FIRST PAST THE POST ASSUMES ALL AUTHORITY. THIS OFTEN RESULTS IN DISPUTE AND DYSFUNCTION.

IN SUBTLE BUT PROFOUND WAYS, THE IMPOSITION OF MAINSTREAM INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNANCE, SHAPED AS THESE ARE BY ALIEN CULTURAL NORMS, HAS DONE MUCH TO CREATE THE SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS AND PASSIVITY THAT OFTEN MARK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES.

THIS LEADS TO THE SECOND CONCEPT AT THE HEART OF OUR STRATEGY: SELF GOVERNMENT.

WITH REGARD TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ABORIGINAL GOVERNANCE, WE CONCLUDE THAT THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION IS VESTED IN ALL ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA. THE RIGHT FINDS ITS FOUNDATION IN EMERGING NORMS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC MORALITY. BY VIRTUE OF THIS RIGHT, ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ARE ENTITLED TO NEGOTIATE FREELY THE TERMS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CANADA AND TO ESTABLISH GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES THAT THEY CONSIDER APPROPRIATE FOR THEIR NEEDS.

THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION IS THE FUNDAMENTAL STARTING POINT FOR ABORIGINAL INITIATIVES IN THE AREA OF GOVERNANCE. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT THE ONLY POSSIBLE BASIS FOR SUCH INITIATIVES. IN ADDITION, ABORIGINAL PEOPLES POSSESS THE INHERENT RIGHT OF SELF-GOVERNMENT WITHIN CANADA.

OUR VIEW ON THIS ISSUE IS CLEAR. THE INHERENT RIGHT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES TO GOVERN THEMSELVES IS FIRMLY ANCHORED IN HISTORY AND, WE BELIEVE, IN LAW.

THE EARLY TREATIES RECOGNIZED ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AS SELF-GOVERNING ENTITIES -- AND, CLEARLY, THEY WERE. SUBSEQUENT ACTS OF PARLIAMENT ERODED THAT SELF-GOVERNANCE GREATLY, BUT IT WAS NEVER ELIMINATED.

THEREFORE, IT IS OUR VIEW THAT SELF-GOVERNMENT WAS AN EXISTING ABORIGINAL AND TREATY RIGHT WHEN SUCH RIGHTS WERE RECOGNIZED BY CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IN 1982.

THE RIGHT TO SELF-GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY. IT CANNOT BE GIVEN. IT EXISTS. IT IS INHERENT. IT IS ALREADY RECOGNIZED AND CONFIRMED BY SECTION 35 OF THE CONSTITUTION.

BUT IMPORTANT AS HISTORY AND LAW ARE, THERE IS ANOTHER FACTOR JUST AS COMPELLING. YOU CANNOT EXPECT RESPONSIBILITY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DENYING AUTHORITY. THE PATTERN OF CANADIAN GOVERNMENTS IS TO SO LIMIT THE AUTHORITY THAT ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENTS CAN EXERCISE THAT THEY AND THEIR PEOPLE REMAIN, EFFECTIVELY, CLIENTS OF A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT AND WARDS OF THE STATE.

OUR REPORT EXAMINES SPECIFIC MEANS BY WHICH ABORIGINAL NATIONS CAN GATHER STRENGTH IN ORDER TO REBUILD THEIR IDENTITIES AND EXERCISE FULL SELF-GOVERNING AUTHORITY WITHIN CANADA.

CERTAIN OF THESE GOVERNING POWERS RELATE DIRECTLY TO THE LIFE AND DISTINCTIVE CULTURE AND IDENTITY OF A PARTICULAR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE. IN THESE AREAS, ABORIGINAL PEOPLE CAN MOVE IMMEDIATELY TO EXERCISE JURISDICTION WITH RESPECT TO THESE POWERS, THOUGH WE RECOMMEND DOING SO COOPERATIVELY WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS.

FOR OTHER POWERS WHICH AFFECT NEIGHBOURING LANDS AND PEOPLE, SUCH AS ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION OR ASPECTS OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE, OR ARE THE OBJECT OF TRANSCENDANT FEDERAL OR PROVINCIAL CONCERN, ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENTS NEED TO ADDRESS THEM THROUGH AGREEMENT WITH FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS.

WHAT WE ARE PROPOSING IS ONE OF THREE ORDERS OF CANADIAN GOVERNMENT BASED ON THE CONCEPT OF SHARED SOVEREIGNTY. BUT THIS SHOULD NOT SEEM FOREIGN -- OR THREATENING -- TO ANYONE. THE CANADIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM IS ANCHORED IN THAT VERY IDEA AND PRACTICE -- DIFFERENT ORDERS OF GOVERNMENT EACH AUTONOMOUS WITHIN ITS OWN SPHERE, SHARING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CANADA AS A WHOLE.

WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS APPLIES TO ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENTS. HOWEVER, SECTION 25 OF THE *CONSTITUTION ACT OF 1982* ALLOWS FOR A FLEXIBLE INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARTER THAT, IN EFFECT, GIVES PRIMACY TO ABORIGINAL AND TREATY RIGHTS WITH APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDS.

FINALLY, WE BELIEVE IT ESSENTIAL THAT ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENTS DEVELOP THE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES THROUGH OWN-SOURCE REVENUES. THEY MUST DEVELOP THEIR OWN SYSTEM OF TAXATION SUPPLEMENTED BY TRANSFER PAYMENTS FROM OTHER GOVERNMENTS.

THE QUESTION ARISES AS TO WHAT THE UNIT OF SELF-GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE. WE BELIEVE IT MUST BE BASED ON HISTORIC NATIONS, THE THIRD BUILDING BLOCK OF OUR STRATEGY.

THE REASONS FOR THIS ARE COMPELLING. AS WE HAVE NOTED, THE CONCEPT OF NATION IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE HISTORY OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES. IT IS HOW THEY SAW -- AND STILL SEE -- THEMSELVES. IT IS THE BROAD COLLECTIVE FROM WHICH THEY DRAW STRENGTH.

BUT THERE ARE VERY CLEAR CONTEMPORARY AND PRACTICAL REASONS AS WELL. SELF-GOVERNMENT WOULD SIMPLY NOT WORK WITH THE PRIMARY UNIT OF GOVERNANCE BEING THE INDIVIDUAL RESERVE OR COMMUNITY RESULTING IN SOME 1000 FIRST NATION, INUIT AND METIS COMMUNITIES. EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT RELATIONS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE. THE ECONOMIES OF SCALE NECESSARY TO EXERCISE BROAD MANDATES AND TO ACHIEVE SELF-RELIANCE WOULD NOT, IN MOST CASES, EXIST. AND LARGER POLITICAL UNITS WILL BE MORE CONDUCTIVE TO FAIR AND OPEN GOVERNMENT.

LET US BE VERY CLEAR. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT NATIONS -- NOT NATION STATES.

THE ABORIGINAL NATION IS NOT -- AND WOULD NOT BE -- A RACE-BASED CONCEPT. IT IS CULTURAL AND POLITICAL. THROUGHOUT HISTORY, ABORIGINAL PEOPLES HAVE WELCOMED NEWCOMERS INTO THEIR MIDST. THE ABORIGINAL NATION IS A WAY TO ORGANIZE AND GIVE EXPRESSION TO ONE'S



CULTURE AND ONE'S LIFE. IT COMPRISES PEOPLE OF MIXED HERITAGE AND BACKGROUND.  
NATIONHOOD IS A QUESTION OF POLITICAL AND CULTURAL BONDS -- NOT BLOOD.

WE ESTIMATE THAT THERE ARE POTENTIALLY SOME 60-80 ABORIGINAL NATIONS -- THE MI'KMAQ, THE ALGONQUIN, THE INNU, THE CREE, THE OJIBWA, THE SAULTAUX, THE BLACKFOOT, THE DENE, THE SALISH, THE HAIDA, THE INUIT, THE RED RIVER METIS, AND MORE. SOME OF THESE PEOPLES - BEING SPREAD OVER A VAST AREA SUCH AS THE CREE AND THE INUIT - MAY ORGANIZE AROUND MORE LIMITED TERRITORIAL ENTITIES SUCH AS THE JAMES BAY CREE IN QUEBEC OR THE INUIT IN NUNAVUT.

THE FINAL BUILDING BLOCK IS LAND, RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.  
WHEN ABORIGINAL PEOPLES FIRST AGREED TO SHARE THIS LAND WITH NEWCOMERS, IT WAS ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT A REASONABLE SHARE OF LAND AND RESOURCES WOULD EXIST FOR THEIR EXCLUSIVE USE, THAT THEIR OWN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES WOULD BE PROTECTED, THAT WHERE LAND WAS SHARED, THE BENEFITS WOULD BE SHARED.

HOWEVER, ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES TODAY HAVE LESS THAN ONE-THIRD THE LAND BASE ACCORDED THEM BY THE WRITTEN TERMS OF THE HISTORIC TREATIES. THE EXCLUSIVE LANDS THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WERE PROMISED HAVE BECOME ONE-HALF OF 1 PER CENT OF THE LAND SOUTH OF THE 60TH PARALLEL.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? TREATY ALLOCATIONS WERE NOT MADE. ALLOCATED LAND WAS LATER EXPROPRIATED OR SOLD TO BUILD HIGHWAYS, RAILWAYS, HYDRO LINES, THE ST LAWRENCE SEAWAY, THE EXPANSION OF CITIES, FOR MILITARY PURPOSES, TO PROVIDE LAND FOR RETURNING VETERANS. RARELY WAS THERE ANY ATTEMPT TO REPLACE LOST LAND.

THIS IS MORE THAN A MORAL QUESTION. THE COURTS HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES HAVE A LEGAL RIGHT TO AN EXPANDED LAND AND RESOURCE BASE AND A SHARE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SOME PART OF WHAT IS NOW CROWN OR PUBLIC LAND. IN SHORT, THERE IS A LEGAL BASIS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF CONTINUING ABORIGINAL TITLE.

HOWEVER, IN OUR VIEW, THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE TODAY GOES BEYOND HISTORIC AND LEGAL RIGHTS. THE NEGOTIATION OF AN ADEQUATE LAND AND RESOURCE BASE IS THE CENTRAL PREREQUISITE FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL, ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES.

LAND AND RESOURCES AND THE MEANS TO GENERATE WEALTH FROM THEM, ARE ESSENTIAL TO FINANCE GOVERNMENTS THROUGH AN ABORIGINAL TAX BASE. THEY ARE ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVING ADEQUATE LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE. THEY ARE NECESSARY TO PROVIDE A HOME FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE.

TO RECOGNIZE THE SELF-GOVERNMENT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WITHOUT AN ADEQUATE CAPACITY TO GENERATE THEIR OWN REVENUES WOULD BE A RECIPE FOR DISASTER.

THE CURRENT PROCESS FOR SETTLING DISPUTES OVER LAND AND RESOURCES IS FATALLY FLAWED. IT MUST BE REPLACED.

IT ASSUMES THE LAND BELONGS TO THE CROWN UNTIL PROVEN OTHERWISE. THIS IS AT ODDS WITH HISTORICAL FACT, AT ODDS WITH THE DOCTRINE OF CONTINUING ABORIGINAL TITLE, AT ODDS WITH THE DUTY OF THE CROWN TO BE THE PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINAL INTERESTS.

THE PROCESS HAS NOT BEEN OPEN TO METIS CLAIMS -- AND IT MUST BE, BECAUSE THE PROMISES MADE TO METIS PEOPLE AS PART OF THE OPENING UP OF THE WEST WERE IMPLEMENTED IN SUCH AN UNJUST WAY.

THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF IS IN A CLEAR CONFLICT OF INTEREST. IT CONTROLS THE PROCESS. IT MAKES THE RULINGS. IT IS PROSECUTOR, JUDGE AND JURY. THIS CANNOT BE THE WAY TO PROTECT BOTH THE RIGHTS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND DEFEND THE INTERESTS OF THE CROWN AS CURRENTLY INTERPRETED.

OUR REPORT PROPOSES A NEW BEGINNING.

WE PROPOSE A NEW TREATY PROCESS BE THE MECHANISM OF CHANGE AND RENEWAL.

THE PURPOSE OF A NEW TREATY PROCESS WOULD BE THREE-FOLD: TO INTERPRET HISTORIC TREATIES IN LIGHT OF THEIR SPIRIT AND INTENT; TO FULFIL THE TERMS OF EXISTING TREATIES AND UPDATE THEM IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT; AND TO MAKE NEW TREATIES WITH ABORIGINAL NATIONS THAT WISH TO ENTER THEM.

WE PROPOSE THAT AN INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL BE ESTABLISHED TO ENSURE THAT BOTH THE SPECIFIC AND COMPREHENSIVE LAND CLAIMS PROCESSES ARE NOT BEING ABUSED, THAT DELAYS ARE KEPT TO A MINIMUM AND THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF FAIRNESS ARE RESPECTED. WE PROPOSE THAT REGIONAL TREATY COMMISSIONS, SIMILAR TO THE B.C. TREATY COMMISSION, ALSO AT ARMS LENGTH FROM GOVERNMENTS, BE CREATED, TO SUPERVISE THE LONGER TERM TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. WE PROPOSE THAT THIS PROCESS BE EMBEDDED IN LEGISLATION SO THAT IT BE GIVEN THE STABILITY AND CERTAINTY IT HAS NEVER HAD.

THUS FAR, WE HAVE SPOKEN OF THE CONCEPTS THAT LIE AT THE HEART OF OUR REPORT. WE TURN NOW TO IMPLEMENTATION -- THE SEQUENCE AND MANNER IN WHICH WE ENVISAGE THIS NEW PARTNERSHIP BEING PUT IN PLACE. THIS WILL REQUIRE A TWENTY-YEAR COMMITMENT FROM GOVERNMENTS AND CANADIAN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

AS WE HAVE SAID, WE SEE THIS HAPPENING THROUGH TWO INTER-RELATED PROCESSES - STRUCTURAL INITIATIVES THAT REBALANCE THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP AND CAPACITY INITIATIVES THAT REBUILD HEALTH AND EFFECTIVENESS IN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES.

WE STRONGLY BELIEVE A NEW ERA SHOULD BEGIN WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA MAKING A CLEAR COMMITMENT TO RENEW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE. THIS WILL REQUIRE AN ACT OF NATIONAL INTENTION OUTLINING THE ESSENCE OF A REBALANCED RELATIONSHIP. WE BELIEVE THIS COULD BEST BE DONE BY A NEW ROYAL PROCLAMATION, ISSUED BY HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN, COMING MORE THAN 230 YEARS AFTER THE FIRST SUCH PROCLAMATION.

THIS WOULD BE OF PROFOUND SYMBOLIC AND SUBSTANTIVE IMPORTANCE. THE MONARCH, IN ADDITION TO BEING CANADA'S HEAD OF STATE, HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN SEEN AS AN ALLIE AND THE PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINAL

THE PROCLAMATION WOULD COMMIT THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TO INTRODUCE COMPANION LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE THE AUTHORITY AND THE TOOLS TO STRUCTURE THEIR OWN POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FUTURE.

THIS IS CRUCIAL. ONCE THE TURNING POINT HAS BEEN PROCLAIMED, CANADIANS -- ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL -- MUST HAVE CONFIDENCE THERE WILL BE NO TURNING BACK. TRUST AND CERTAINTY ARE REQUIRED TO REBUILD THIS RELATIONSHIP. LEGISLATION IS NEEDED TO REPLACE THE DISCRETIONARY NATURE OF THE CURRENT POLICY PROCESS.

- \* AN ABORIGINAL NATION RECOGNITION AND GOVERNMENT ACT WOULD ESTABLISH A PROCESS AND CRITERIA FOR THE RECOGNITION OF EACH ABORIGINAL NATION, ACKNOWLEDGE ITS IMMEDIATE JURISDICTION OVER "CORE ISSUES" WITHIN ITS EXISTING TERRITORIES, AND PROVIDE INTERIM FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS TO HELP FINANCE SELF-GOVERNMENT. AT THE POINT OF RECOGNITION OF A PARTICULAR NATION, THE INDIAN ACT WOULD CEASE TO HAVE EFFECT FOR THAT NATION.
- \* AN ABORIGINAL TREATIES IMPLEMENTATION ACT WOULD ENABLE A RECOGNIZED ABORIGINAL NATION, IN NEGOTIATION WITH OTHER CANADIAN GOVERNMENTS, TO RENEW ITS EXISTING TREATIES OR CREATE NEW TREATIES TO ESTABLISH ITS FULL JURISDICTION AS A MEMBER OF AN ABORIGINAL ORDER OF GOVERNMENT AND ESTABLISH OR EXPAND ITS LAND AND RESOURCE BASE TO FOSTER SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND CREATE A HOME FOR ITS PEOPLE.
- \* AN ABORIGINAL LANDS AND TREATIES TRIBUNAL ACT ESTABLISHING AN INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL WOULD ENSURE FAIR TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AND OVERSEE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREED INTERIM MEASURES TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES DURING THE LONG-TERM TREATY PROCESS.
- \* AN ABORIGINAL PARLIAMENT ACT WOULD ESTABLISH A BODY TO REPRESENT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WITHIN FEDERAL GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS AND ADVISE PARLAMENT ON MATTERS AFFECTING ABORIGINAL PEOPLE. THIS WOULD BE THE

FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE EVENTUAL CREATION BY CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT OF A HOUSE OF FIRST PEOPLES TO TAKE A PLACE IN THE GOVERNING OF THE COUNTRY ALONGSIDE THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE SENATE.

- \* AN ABORIGINAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT ACT AND AN INDIAN AND INUIT SERVICES DEPARTMENT ACT WOULD REPLACE THE DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT - THE FIRST TO IMPLEMENT THE NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH ABORIGINAL NATIONS, THE SECOND TO ADMINISTER CONTINUING SERVICES FOR GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT YET OPTED FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT.

THE PROCLAMATION AND COMPANION LEGISLATION CAN BE INITIATED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTING ON ITS OWN. BUT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR THE FUTURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP IF THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA, THE PROVINCES, THE TERRITORIES AND THE ABORIGINAL NATIONS WERE TO CONSULT ON THE CONTENT OF THE PROCLAMATION AND THE COMPANION LEGISLATION FROM THE BEGINNING.

TO THIS END, WE CALL FOR A MEETING OF FIRST MINISTERS AND ABORIGINAL LEADERS TO BE CONVENED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ITS PURPOSE WOULD BE TO CONSIDER OUR RECOMMENDATIONS, CONSULT ON THE PROPOSED ROYAL PROCLAMATION AND SET UP A FORUM TO WORK OUT A CANADA-WIDE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT FOR NEGOTIATING KEY ELEMENTS OF THE AGENDA FOR CHANGE ESPECIALLY:

- \* PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE REDISTRIBUTION OF LAND AND RESOURCES
- \* THE SCOPE OF ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENT JURISDICTION
- \* PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS
- \* PRINCIPLES FOR THE CO-MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS, AND
- \* THE NATURE OF INTERIM RELIEF AGREEMENTS

THIS FORUM SHOULD HAVE THE YEAR 2000 TO COMPLETE ITS WORK.

CONCURRENTLY, THE PROCESS OF ABORIGINAL NATION BUILDING WOULD GET UNDERWAY. THIS WILL LEAD TO THE RECONNECTION OF COMMUNITIES SPLIT APART BY THE *INDIAN ACT*, THE

CREATION OF CONSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNING PROCEDURES, THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALING.

ONCE ABORIGINAL NATIONS HAVE GONE THROUGH THE PROCESS OF REBUILDING AND RECOGNITION, A TREATY NEGOTIATION OR RENEWAL PROCESS WOULD BEGIN. CENTRAL TO THAT PROCESS WOULD BE THE NEGOTIATION OF THE ABORIGINAL NATION'S JURISDICTION, THE REDISTRIBUTION OF LAND AND RESOURCES AND LONG-TERM FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS.

TAKEN TOGETHER, THESE MEASURES REPRESENT PROFOUND STRUCTURAL CHANGE. THEY WILL TAKE TIME TO PUT IN PLACE. BUT AS THAT HAPPENS, A REINFORCING CIRCLE OF WELL-BEING WILL BEGIN TO TAKE HOLD. BY TAKING AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY THEMSELVES AND WITH THE INSTRUMENTS OF SELF-RELIANCE BEING MADE AVAILABLE, THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WILL IMPROVE.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE SECOND TRACK OF OUR OVERALL STRATEGY -- GATHERING STRENGTH AND BUILDING CAPACITY. THIS WOULD PRECEDE AND OVERLAP WITH STRUCTURAL CHANGE, PROVIDING THE HUMAN UNDERPINNINGS OF A NEW PARTNERSHIP.

OUR WORK CONFIRMED IN OUR MINDS THAT VERY OFTEN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE KNOW THE WAY FORWARD. THEY KNOW WHERE THE SOLUTIONS TO THEIR SOCIAL PROBLEMS LIE. THE ISSUE IS NOT LACK OF WISDOM OR WILL. IT IS ALMOST INVARIABLY BLOCKAGE -- A LACK OF AUTHORITY OR FINANCIAL OR HUMAN RESOURCES. THE FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE IS TO REMOVE THOSE BLOCKAGES IN ORDER TO LIBERATE THE HEALING ENERGY THAT IS NEEDED.

A BROAD, INTEGRATED EFFORT IS REQUIRED. OUR REPORT DETAILS DOZENS OF INITIATIVES THAT WILL HELP GATHER STRENGTH AND BUILD CAPACITY. THESE INCLUDE:

- \* ALLEVIATING THE STILL APPALLING LIVING CONDITIONS IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF HOUSING, SANITATION AND WATER.
- \* A BROAD EFFORT TO IMPROVE EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AND COMPLETION AT SCHOOL.

- \* CREATING ABORIGINAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF HEALING SERVICES.
- \* ENSURING THAT MAINSTREAM INSTITUTIONS DELIVER THEIR SERVICES TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN A MANNER THAT RESPECTS THEIR CULTURE.
- \* EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.
- \* IMPLEMENTING AN ALTERNATIVE TO WELFARE.

THESE INITIATIVES AND OTHERS WOULD WORK SYNERGISTICALLY TO PROVIDE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WITH THE TOOLS TO SHOULDER RESPONSIBILITY THEMSELVES AND ENTER INTO NEW PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL CANADIANS.

WE BELIEVE CANADA SHOULD COMMIT TO HELP CLOSING THE GAP IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL CANADIANS BY 50 PER CENT WITHIN THE NEXT 20 YEARS.

WE WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS TWO TYPES OF RESPONSE WE EXPECT THIS STRATEGY WILL MEET.

THE FIRST WILL COME FROM THOSE WHO WILL SAY THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF OUR STRATEGY ARE ALREADY IN PLACE. THAT THE INHERENT RIGHT TO SELF-GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED. THAT LAND AND RESOURCES ARE UNDER NEGOTIATION. THAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES -- WHETHER ON HEALTH CARE OR EDUCATION OR JUSTICE -- ARE BEING ADDRESSED.

WE ACCEPT THAT HONEST EFFORTS AT A BETTER APPROACH ARE BEING MOUNTED. THESE HOWEVER ARE CLEARLY INADEQUATE FOR THE CHALLENGE AT HAND. IN ADDITION, THEY REMAIN ALMOST WHOLLY SUBJECT TO SHIFTING POLITICAL AGENDAS. THE BASIC STRAIGHTJACKET OF THE STATUS QUO REMAINS IN PLACE.

FOR DECADES, THE PREVAILING PERSPECTIVE HAS BEEN TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN TERMS OF A MINISTER OR A DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT DEALING WITH A CLIENT GROUP -- OF INDIVIDUALS, OR BANDS.

UNTIL THAT STRAIGHTJACKET CHANGES, PROGRESS WILL BE LIMITED, NO MATTER THE COMPETENCE OR CONVICTION OF THE MINISTER. WE CALL UPON THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TO DEAL WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ON A NATION-TO-NATION BASIS RECOGNIZING AND ENCOURAGING THE EMERGENCE OF ANOTHER ORDER OF GOVERNMENT.

IT BECAME ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO US THAT ANY STRATEGY THAT IS NOT BASED ON THAT PREMISE AND, IN ADDITION, IS NOT INTEGRATED -- THAT IS AD HOC, PIECEMEAL OR SPORADIC -- WILL NOT DO THE JOB.

BY DEVELOPING A CLEAR VISION OF THE FUTURE AND COMMITTING TO A SET OF LEGISLATIVE INSTRUMENTS TO GET THERE, THE TRUST NEEDED TO SPARK REGENERATION THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUALS AND HUNDREDS OF COMMUNITIES, WILL TAKE HOLD. WE BELIEVE SUCH AN EFFORT IS IN THE FINEST TRADITION OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THIS COUNTRY.

BUT LET US TURN TO ANOTHER TYPE OF RESPONSE.

OUR REPORT WILL BE QUESTIONED BY THOSE WHO HOLD A STRICT 'EQUAL RIGHTS' VIEW OF SOCIETY -- THAT DIFFERENT TREATMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT NEEDS OR HISTORIES IS SIMPLY WRONG. THIS IS NOT A PERSPECTIVE WE SHARE, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE HISTORICAL RECORD, BUT IT IS WORTHY OF SERIOUS DEBATE.

FIRST, TO SUGGEST THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLE'S RIGHTS SHOULD BE NO DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF OTHER CANADIANS DENIES HISTORY. IT IGNORES THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENTS BY WHICH THIS LAND WAS OPENED UP. THOSE AGREEMENTS CONFIRMED RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS AND AGREED TO RESPECT DIFFERENCES.

THESE AGREEMENTS CANNOT NOW BE DISREGARDED IN THE NAME OF EQUAL RIGHTS ANY MORE THAN CAN THE AGREEMENTS GOVERNING THE ACCESSION OF VARIOUS PROVINCES TO CANADA THAT CONFERRED DIFFERING RIGHTS AND BENEFITS ON THEIR CITIZENS BE RENEGED UPON.



SECOND, IT MUST BE SAID THAT TO DENY THE REALITY OF A DIFFERENT ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND WORLD-VIEW IS TO DISPLAY, AT THE VERY LEAST, A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE. TO SAY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE SHOULD ACCEPT ASSIMILATION AND THE LOSS OF THEIR CULTURES AND IDENTITIES IS UNJUST -- AND UNWORKABLE, AS WE NOW KNOW.

OTHERS, HOWEVER, USE 'EQUAL RIGHTS' LANGUAGE AND REFERENCES TO APARTHEID AND RACE-BASED GOVERNMENT TO MASK THEIR PREJUDICE. TODAY, WE ASK CANADIANS TO EXAMINE THE OBJECTIVES OF THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN THE TACTICS OF FEAR AND CONSIDER WHETHER SUCH ATTITUDES ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE VALUES OF JUSTICE AND HONOUR THAT WE BELIEVE CHARACTERIZES OUR COUNTRY.

BEFORE WE CONCLUDE WE WANT TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF COST -- THE COST OF THE PRESENT SITUATION, OF OUR RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE BENEFITS THAT WILL COME FROM CHANGE.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT THIS COUNTRY CANNOT AFFORD TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT REGIME OF DEPENDENCY, LOST PRODUCTIVITY, AND EVER GROWING SOCIAL EXPENDITURES. THE AMOUNT THAT ALL GOVERNMENTS WILL SPEND IN 1996 IN RELATION TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IS ESTIMATED AT JUST OVER \$13 BILLION. THIS COULD RISE TO OVER \$17 BILLION ANNUALLY IN TWENTY YEARS AS A RESULT OF DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES ALONE.

MUCH OF THAT RELATES TO SERVICES THAT OTHER CANADIANS RECEIVE BUT \$2.5 BILLION OF IT IS SPENT ON REMEDIAL PROGRAMS TO OFFSET THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY, ILL-HEALTH AND SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION. THIS LATTER AMOUNT IS IN EFFECT A LOSS TO THE CANADIAN ECONOMY AND TAXPAYERS. TO THIS MUST BE ADDED THE INCOME THAT IS NOT EARNED BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND TAXES THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLE THEREFORE CANNOT PAY. TOGETHER THESE AMOUNT A LOSS TO THE ECONOMY OF \$7.5 BILLION A YEAR. THAT IS EQUIVALENT TO CLOSE TO 1 PER CENT OF CANADA'S GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT.

WHAT IS MORE, WITH THE SELF-IDENTIFYING ABORIGINAL POPULATION RISING FROM AN ESTIMATED 811,000 TODAY TO 1,100,000 IN 2016, THE ANNUAL ECONOMIC LOSS TO CANADA WILL RISE FROM \$7.5 BILLION TO \$11 BILLION OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS.

SEEN FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, THE ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT OUR STRATEGY CALLS FOR OF ONE AND A HALF BILLION AT THE END OF FIVE YEARS TO UP TO TWO BILLION A YEAR OVER THE NEXT 15 YEARS MAKES SENSE. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT WITHIN TEN YEARS THIS STRATEGY WILL LEAD TO A FALL IN REMEDIAL COSTS AND A RISE IN GOVERNMENT REVENUES AS ABORIGINAL PEOPLE BECOME MORE PRODUCTIVE.

AS THE BENEFITS TAKE HOLD -- IN TERMS OF HIGHER INCOMES, HIGHER GOVERNMENT REVENUES, INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND REDUCED SPENDING ON REMEDIAL PROGRAMS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE -- THE FINANCIAL PLUSES WILL INCREASINGLY OVERTAKE THE COSTS. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN YEAR 15 AND 20, GOVERNMENT GAINS WILL BE HIGHER THAN THE NEW INVESTMENT WE ARE CALLING FOR. AT THAT POINT THERE WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT NET FINANCIAL GAIN TO ALL GOVERNMENTS AND THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE -- A GAIN THAT WILL THEN GROW WITH EACH PASSING YEAR.

BUT CONSIDER THE STAKES HERE, NOT ONLY IN FINANCIAL TERMS, BUT IN HUMAN TERMS.

AMONG ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TODAY, 56 PER CENT ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 25 WITH TWO-THIRDS OF THEM BEING UNDER 15. THINK OF THE CONTRIBUTION THEY CAN MAKE NOT ONLY TO THEIR COMMUNITIES AND NATIONS BUT TO THE WHOLE COUNTRY.

AND CONSIDER AS WELL, THE COST OF NOT ACTING NOW -- OF LETTING THE CLOCK TICK, OF ENSURING YET ANOTHER LOST GENERATION. BY SHOWING LEADERSHIP TODAY, WE CAN CAPITALIZE ON GREAT OPPORTUNITY AND AVOID GREAT TRAGEDY.

WE CHALLENGE PEOPLE TO DEMONSTRATE HOW THE CURRENT SITUATION, IN PURELY FISCAL TERMS, COULD POSSIBLY, OVER TIME, BE SUPERIOR TO THE APPROACH WE ARE PUTTING FORWARD. THE STATUS QUO WOULD DIG A DEEPER HOLE. OUR STRATEGY INVOLVES DIGGING A WAY OUT.

NOW, SOME MAY CONCUR WITH OUR ANALYSIS. BUT THEY MAY SAY WE SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD TO TAKE ACTION TODAY.

AT BOTTOM, OF COURSE, THIS IS A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES AND LEADERSHIP AND VISION. OUR VIEW IS THAT IT WOULD BE A TRAGEDY OF HISTORIC DIMENSIONS IF, AT A TIME WHEN THERE IS FINALLY AWARENESS OF THE ERRORS OF PAST ABORIGINAL POLICY, GOVERNMENTS WERE TO SAY: "WE NOW KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM IS AND WE NOW KNOW HOW TO SOLVE IT. WE JUST CAN'T".

A GREAT DEBT IS OWING. GOVERNMENTS CANNOT, IN GOOD CONSCIENCE, DEFAULT ON IT. WE MUST BEQUEATH TO OUR CHILDREN A RELATIONSHIP THAT IS NO LONGER A PROBLEM BUT AN ASSET THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT OUR PROPOSALS WILL TAKE TIME TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR PURPOSE. THAT IS AS IT HAS TO BE. THE CHALLENGES ARE TOO GREAT TO MEET OVER NIGHT. FIRM FOUNDATIONS HAVE TO BE LAID. THE PROCESS OF RENEWAL CANNOT BE DICTATED. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RENEWAL -- ONCE GOVERNMENTS STEP BACK -- BELONGS TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLES THEMSELVES.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE SICK OF DEPENDENCE AND LACK OF CONTROL OVER THEIR LIVES. THEY ARE PREPARED TO TAKE THE RISK, TO DO THE HARD WORK THEY KNOW RENEWAL DEMANDS. AND OTHER CANADIANS ARE ALSO READY AT LONG LAST TO CLOSE ONE OF THE SADDEST CHAPTERS IN OUR HISTORY.

WHAT AN ENTERPRISE WITH WHICH TO ENTER THE NEW MILLENNIUM. WHAT A WASTEFUL BURDEN TO BE ABLE TO LEAVE BEHIND. AND WHAT POSSIBILITIES OF PEACE AND HARMONY AWAIT IF, TOGETHER, WE GET TO WORK NOW TO REALIZE THIS NEW NATIONAL DREAM.

LOOKING TO THE PAST, ABORIGINAL PEOPLES SPEAK OF BEING OF THIS LAND SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, LET US AGREE TO SHARE THE PROMISE OF THIS LAND TOGETHER FOR TIME IMMEMORIAL. LET US AGREE TO DO SO FOR "AS LONG AS THE SUN SHINES ABOVE AND THE WATER FLOWS IN THE OCEAN".