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**EVIDENCE**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Colin Mayes**

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## Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

Thursday, October 19, 2006

• (0905)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC)):** I will open this meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for Thursday, October 19, 2006. Committee members, you have the orders of the day before you. We'll be talking about post-secondary education from 9 o'clock until 10:30.

Today the witnesses are from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. We have with us Christine Cram, acting senior assistant deputy minister, socio-economic policy and regional operations; Richard Budgell, executive coordinator of post-secondary education, education branch; Allan MacDonald, director general, office of the federal interlocutor for Métis and non-status Indians; and Mary Tobin Oates, senior adviser, Inuit relations secretariat. Welcome to the committee.

We also have visitors from the school back here, and I welcome you today. Once again, I want to say thank you for the hospitality that we enjoyed when we had the opportunity to visit the school. It's good to see you here.

We're going to have presentations for 10 minutes, and then we'll have questions. Who will start off the presentation?

Madame Cram. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Christine Cram (Acting Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Socio-Economic Policy and Regional Operations, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Thank you, and good morning.

I would like to thank the chair and the committee members for the opportunity to speak on the subject of education this morning. I am very pleased to see that there are so many young people here today, because indeed, what this committee is considering now is of great importance to them.

INAC officials last spoke to the standing committee about first nation education in June of this year, and at that time we committed to coming back to speak to you again to provide a report on our progress to date.

[Translation]

Today, we will speak more specifically about post-secondary education but we would also like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on First Nations education.

[English]

I'll start by reiterating a few key points that were made by INAC officials in June. The \$1.5 billion in planned education expenditures in 2005-06 represents over 25% of total departmental expenditures. These expenditures support education programs, the majority relating to elementary and secondary instruction for first nation students ordinarily resident on reserve. As you probably know, the overwhelming majority of education programs are delivered by first nations and Inuit communities and organizations.

[Translation]

Since Departmental officials last appeared before the Standing Committee, we have completed our draft policy framework, with the involvement of the First Nations, that outlines rules and responsibilities of the department and of First Nations. We are now working towards a management framework that will renew and improve program delivery in all areas of First Nations education.

• (0910)

[English]

Post-secondary education expenditures account for about \$305 million of the \$1.5 billion. Within post-secondary expenditures, there are three component areas of funding.

As the first component, most of the \$305 million is directed towards the post-secondary student support program, which pays for tuition, materials, and living allowances for first nation and Inuit students. This program is not residency based—that is, first nation recipients can live on or off reserve—but it requires that the recipients be status Indians or recognized Inuit.

The second component is the Indian studies support program, which provides funding to post-secondary institutions for programs and services that are specifically tailored to first nations and Inuit students. An example of this program is an aboriginal leadership and management program at Blue Quills First Nations College in Alberta, in partnership with Athabasca University. In 2004-05, program expenditures in the Indian studies support program component were approximately \$20 million.

The third component is the university college entrance preparation program, which provides expenses to students for one year of preparatory course work prior to university or college administration. This program is for those who do not have high school credentials that would qualify them for admission to a post-secondary institution.

[Translation]

Today, almost 100% of post-secondary education students support funding is administered by First Nations and Inuit administering organizations. Unlike K/12 education, for which the Department holds a statutory responsibility, our involvement with post-secondary education is a result of a policy dating back several decades.

[English]

In 2004-05, INAC post-secondary funding supported approximately 23,000 students and over 50 post-secondary institutions.

Over time, the investment in first nations and Inuit post-secondary education has increased significantly, as have participation rates. For example, from 1976 to today, the number of students supported through post-secondary education programs has increased close to tenfold.

We know, however, that qualified applicants are currently turned down by some first nations because of a shortage of funding in the first nations post-secondary allocation in that year. Many first nations students participate in post-secondary education using other sources of funding, such as the Canada student loans program.

There are also a number of scholarships being made available from the private sector for aboriginal students. I think it's very positive that these are growing. There are also mechanisms, such as the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, that offer scholarships and bursaries.

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's aboriginal human resources development strategy also makes funding available for skills training.

[Translation]

Despite the large increase over several decades in the number of post-secondary students supported, post-secondary attainment rates for First Nations and Inuit do not yet match those of other Canadians. According to the 2001 census, 5 per cent of Aboriginals 15 years and older have a university degree, compared to 16 per cent for the Canadian population in general.

[English]

The picture is brighter in the area of college education and trade certification. Aboriginal people have attained college diplomas and trade certification at levels comparable to the rest of the population: 27% among the total population; compared to 25% among the aboriginal population.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is trying to understand why post-secondary attainment rates are not comparable. A recent report by the researcher Michael Mendelson, entitled *Aboriginal Peoples and Post-secondary Education in Canada*, uses census data to provide a picture of the state of affairs of aboriginal peoples in post-secondary education.

His main finding is that there is a pressing need to address the very low aboriginal high school graduation rates in order to increase participation rates among first nations and Inuit in post-secondary education. He says that the main problem in the capacity of the K to 12 system is to get students into post-secondary education. The good news is that aboriginal students who graduate from high school are just as likely as students from the general Canadian population to go on to and graduate from post-secondary education.

I understand that Mr. Mendelson will be appearing before this committee next week.

● (0915)

[Translation]

As part of the Department's comprehensive review of all education programs, we committed to undertake a review of our post-secondary education program. That review has involved the participation of First Nations and Inuit organizations, and consultation with other government departments. Consultation with other stakeholders on policy options to upgrade the program is anticipated over the coming months.

[English]

Over the past year and a half, as part of their review, many diagnostic reports on post-secondary education were completed. Some of the findings of these reports are as follows.

First nations would like to see increased funding in the program to reflect increases in tuition fees and cost of living and increases in overall demand. There is also a widespread recommendation to expand the length of time allowed for the university and college entrance program from one year to two years. There's also a proposal to provide support for post-secondary education and training programs of less than one academic year.

In response to these findings and our own continuing analysis, we are developing options for a re-engineered program, including new delivery models. These options will be developed with first nations and Inuit students, educators, service providers, and organizations over the coming months.

We realize we need to do much better to ensure first nations and Inuit children and youth have the academic footing to move on to post-secondary studies and have the skills to take advantage of the merging opportunities resulting from investments in resource development projects, such as the oil sands and the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, and the retirement of baby boomers.

[Translation]

All parties recognize that the status quo is not accomplishing the desired results on reserve and that better coordination and a stronger education system would properly equip learners to reach their potential.

Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** Are there going to be further presentations by anyone?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** No.

**The Chair:** On the Liberal side, who would like to take the lead?

Madam Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to all of you for coming here today.

I'm struck by your closing comments that much more has to be done, and I appreciate that. I was also struck, as you went through your presentation, by your acknowledgement that post-secondary education is a result of social policy dating back several decades and is not a matter of law.

What I'm interested in is that the Constitution recognizes that the provinces have responsibility for education, but I don't know that it means education for just K to 12. You've said here today that INAC's position is that post-secondary education is a matter of social policy rather than, in my words, of fulfilling a legal obligation. How does the department justify this position? What options has the department brought forward to clarify which government has primary responsibility for supporting first nations post-secondary education?

A subsequent question is this. If the federal government views post-secondary education as a matter of social policy and not of law, and since INAC has the fiduciary responsibility to ensure adequate education for first nations, while recognizing, as you indicated, that first nations are not getting the opportunities or are perhaps failing within the post-secondary education system, my question is, why aren't you reacting—or perhaps why isn't the federal government reacting—in a more aggressive manner?

● (0920)

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Thank you for the question.

To explain the departmental position, this committee I'm sure is aware that there is very little legislative base for the department to operate under. The main piece of legislation is the Indian Act. The Indian Act speaks about education, but how it speaks about education is very much related to children; it was to do with ensuring that children went to school, and it speaks particularly about children between the ages of 6 and 16. As this committee knows, the Indian Act is a very old and outdated piece of legislation.

When we look at what the department is responsible for in terms of law, we have to use our statutory instrument. I'm sure this committee has considered that this statutory instrument is out of date and needs replacing.

You're right, there are other instruments, such as the Constitution, that speak to aboriginal and treaty rights, and maybe at some point in the future there might be a different legislative base. But at the present time the legislative base we are using for the provision of programs is the Indian Act.

We still recognize that post-secondary education is a very important program, and that's why we spend over \$300 million a year on it. As I said in my remarks, we recognize that this doesn't address all of the need and that we need to do more. That's why we're reviewing the policy and the programs in that regard.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Do I have time for a follow-up? Then I'll pass it to Mr. Merasty.

You talk about reviewing the programs and the policies. While the reviews are going on, many young people are being left behind. What happens? It strikes me that the young people who are sitting in this room and living in communities are just as talented as young people throughout the country.

What happens to these young people who are being left behind? What opportunities are there for them?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** You raise a very good point. I would simply say, though, that the research is showing us that where we need to primarily invest is in kindergarten to grade 12, because what we need to do is get children to graduate from secondary school so they can then go on to post-secondary.

I would say the government's top priority is on K to 12, to try to get the graduation rates increased. Then there'll be more kids in post-secondary. As you correctly point out, there are kids now who aren't able to access post-secondary. Also, if we are successful in getting more kids to graduate out of grade 12, then there will be a higher demand for post-secondary services. We need to figure out how to address that.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I appreciate what you're saying, and I've had fairly intimate involvement with the K to 12 system and aboriginal education, so I know the challenges. But I also know that there are large numbers of aboriginal young people who today are not able to access the post-secondary education system in all its different manifestations. That's my concern, because it is opportunities lost for young people today.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have a minute, I think, Gary.

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** I have a very quick question.

One of the big issues I've had to deal with as an aboriginal leader in the past and in this role right now—and I raised it in the last committee meeting—is myths. The media and the general public largely say that this gap that exists is the fault of the first nations and Métis students. This is something that troubles me, because sometimes blame is assigned to the aboriginal community. This is a big problem because it demoralizes and it draws attention away from some real solutions that could be focused on, because there are success stories out there.

We've all acknowledged that the waiting lists are long, that the funding growth has been 2%, and yet the population growth has been three or four times that amount annually.

How do you think the department can help tackle this myth? Aside from increasing the funding, do you think there is a role for a department of government to actually get the right message out there? This message is so damaging and so blaming that it actually constricts. Do you see a role for the department to try to change that myth?

• (0925)

**Ms. Christine Cram:** That's a very good point you raise, and as I mentioned in the remarks, when aboriginal young people go to university, they have the same success rate as all Canadians.

I should say that the department is working on a project at the present time on success stories and recognizes that there needs to be much more done in that regard. We're trying to find success stories in all different areas—business, housing, innovation—so certainly we should look at what we can do in education.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In fact, you are divided. Under the Indian Act—how I hate the name of that title!—you are legally bound to provide education to Aboriginals up until the age of 16 years old.

From what I gather, spending of the \$305 million is left to the discretion of the minister. This is of concern to me. Am I right in saying that this envelope may possibly one day disappear?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Technically, yes, but politically speaking...

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Regardless of the political or technical reasons, we know that the members on the other side will find a way to maneuver tactics. Just think about it: they could very well eliminate this envelope. On a political standpoint, this would be difficult, but technically speaking, it is possible, because the envelope falls under the discretion of the Minister.

I would like to know who is the director general for socio-economic policy and regional operations.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** She is a lady by the name of Joan Katz. She is currently the acting director general.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** That is what I wanted to hear.

Like Ms. Katz, you are also in an acting position. There are many managers in acting positions in this department. There has even been a minister and a deputy minister. I do not mean to say that the minister is an acting minister. It is an errant thought that unfortunately just escaped.

I would like to know if you read the June 2005 report produced by PricewaterhouseCoopers on post-secondary education, as prepared by the evaluation and internal audit Branch. Have you seen this document?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** I have not seen that document, but Richard has.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** So I am going to ask you a very specific question. The report contains five recommendations. I have read them, but I am not going to list them, for fear the chairman might put a stop to it.

These five recommendations on post-secondary education contained very specific instructions to the department. Where are you at in the concrete application of those recommendations?

[English]

**Mr. Richard Budgell (Executive Coordinator of Post-secondary Education, Education Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** I guess I would say that we have evaluations of all of the program components under post-secondary education. We have, in addition, the report of the Auditor General.

The process that we're now going through, which we have to complete by June 2007, jointly with our partners, with first nations and Inuit, is to come up with our response to the research that's been done, including the evaluations, other studies that we've had done, mostly over the past year, and come up with a clear path forward on how we're going to improve program delivery and make sure it benefits the maximum number of students. So it is all being considered in terms of moving forward.

We take those kinds of things very seriously, evaluations, and I would say especially the review from the Auditor General, and we know that's exactly what we have to grapple with—to come up with a new management framework by June 2007.

• (0930)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** I agree with you. I do not remember who appeared before the committee this week, but I believe that the individual was speaking on behalf of First Nations. He said that the Department had enough reports on post-secondary education. I am pretty much of the same view, especially when I read this. The report says the following:

- consult with the Director General, Finance, Branch of Corporate Services, to review the status of compliance reviews [...]

It also says:

In practice, this might mean a committee that meets at regular intervals to establish monitoring guidelines and to review and act on the results;

That was recommendation No. 4. Has it been implemented? Has the committee been created, and if so, is it made up of just officials or does it include First Nations and Inuit people?

[English]

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** That specific committee doesn't exist, no. We have been working with a working group with the Assembly of First Nations and Inuit representatives on post-secondary education, but the specific committee that you've described doesn't exist.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Why?

[English]

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** It's something that we would be dealing with as we create our new management framework.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** May I remind you that the reason this committee went to the trouble of studying the issue of post-secondary education is that action was urgently needed. This has been called for.

Over the past few weeks, we have been told more than once how difficult it is to reach the post-secondary level. I understand those difficulties, but now, somebody is knocking on the door, and the knocking is very loud. Can the committee rest assured that steps are going to be taken, and above all, that this will be reflected in the upcoming budget, which, let us hope, is going to be tabled in February or March 2007? In light of the recommendations, are funding requests going to be made?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** We cannot guarantee you that any particular item will appear in the budget. That is beyond our control. However, one thing is for sure: we are currently working on policy renewal. We also have to see to it that the way in which the program is managed is improved, in response to the Auditor General's findings. We also hope that the work will enable us to identify the needs. However, officials do not have the power to make sure that the budget addresses those needs.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Of course, I understand all of that, having been involved in sports for years. I know how it works.

You establish a policy.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Yes.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** And you assess the costs of its implementation. That is what I want to hear. October and November are budget preparation time. That is where we are at now. The Minister may be asked to do his job after, but for your part, are you going to translate that into figures?

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemay.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** That is it.

**The Chair:** Ms. Crowder.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** But can she answer my question, Mr. Chairman? Give her 30 seconds.

[English]

**The Chair:** Do you know what the question is?

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Cram:** In fact, to determine how much money we need, we have to know what the demand is. For the time being, the information we have is inaccurate. So we cannot say whether we need double \$300 million or how much is available to us. We will have to get that information before we can forecast the needs.

• (0935)

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** I hope this committee can accommodate some input into that as we deliver our report on post-secondary education.

Madam Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for coming.

I have a brief comment before I ask a question.

You talked about the K to 12 system, and I think we all would acknowledge that there are some serious problems with the K to 12 system. However, there are some serious problems in post-secondary education. Unless there's a very clear focus and some action on the

numerous reports...as you probably are well aware, the researcher has given us numerous reports over a number of years that have talked about recommendations for post-secondary education and yet there isn't substantial movement. There are increasing numbers of students who simply do not have access to a post-secondary education, whether it's vocational, trades, technical, or university. So I think there needs to be some serious movement on that.

In your presentation you said there's \$1.5 billion in planned education expenditure. Is it possible to provide the committee with an estimate of how much of that money actually contributes directly to bottoms in seats, to students in seats, the direct delivery? I don't imagine you can answer that today.

In your presentation you also talked about the fact that you've completed your draft policy framework—I assume that's on the K to 12 system—and you're working on your management framework. Is it possible for the committee to get a copy of the draft policy framework?

You also indicated that over time investment in first nations and Inuit post-secondary education has increased significantly. My understanding is that over 10 years the increase has been at 2%, which is significantly under the growth in the population. That's just a comment.

You also indicated that you have committed to undertaking a review of post-secondary education and that the review has involved the participation...and so on. Is there any written documentation on that or a preliminary report that the committee could have access to?

Those are some follow-up items on your presentation.

One of the things the committee has heard quite clearly, and we had the benefit of going to the Nunavut school in Ottawa, is that there is a real challenge for first nations educational institutions to have access to funding. One of the mechanisms that institutions have is the ISSP, which is project-based. That's my understanding of it.

There are two pieces to that. One is that the Inuit, as far as we've been able to determine, have not accessed ISSP funding despite the fact that they're in the criteria. That's one question. The second question is that under Bill C-48 the government made a determination to allocate some money towards capital expenditures, yet first nations institutions, it is my understanding, were not allocated any capital expenditures. I would like you to confirm that it is true that they didn't get any capital expenditures. And if not, why not?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Regarding the ISSP program that you're familiar with, Inuit organizations have in fact received ISSP funding.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Could you provide a list of that to the committee members?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Inuit organizations that have received ISSP funding?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Yes, and what the projects were. Thank you.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Yes.

The situation in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories is quite complex in terms of the way the funding has been made available. Because the governments of Northwest Territories and Nunavut both provide post-secondary student funding, our ISSP funding across the country operates as a 12% proportion of the overall Indian Affairs post-secondary budget. The challenge has been in relation to the territories, because there is no Indian Affairs student funding provided in those two territories. That means the ISSP funding doesn't have a base. But in fact within the terms and conditions of the program, Inuit organizations are as eligible as first nations organizations or institutions.

• (0940)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** So is there a mechanism through which they can apply?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** In every other region of the country, the institutions would go to the Indian Affairs regional offices and apply.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** But you're saying that there isn't a mechanism in Nunavut for them to do that.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** In fact there has been post-secondary funding disbursed through the regional office in Nunavut.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Was it ISSP funding?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** No.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** That's the particular problem. It's fine to say they're in their criteria, but if there's no mechanism for them to apply for ISSP funding, what's the point? So is there no statutory limitation to their applying; it's a matter of process?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** No, it's not restricted in the terms of the terms and conditions of the program. They are not excluded.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** But there is no allocation?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** There has been no allocation.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** So on Bill C-48 on capital expenditure...?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** In terms of Bill C-48, it's our understanding that there's a \$1 billion, one-time, post-secondary education infrastructure trust fund to provide supplementary funding to the provinces and territories. I'm not an expert in this regard, and we could find more information for you on that program, if you would like, but this money is to go to the provinces and territories. It's not going specifically to aboriginal organizations.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I think that's the point. There was no consideration in the allocation for aboriginal organizations. It was a blanket turnover to the provinces and territories, with no requirement for consideration of aboriginal organizations.

I know it's a political decision, but I just want to be clear that the department didn't receive any instruction around putting forward something around part of that allocation going to aboriginal institutions.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Am I out of time?

**The Chair:** Yes, you are.

Mr. Bruinooge, please.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC):** I hope you're all having a good day.

I want to ask you a few questions in relation to the parcel of funding, within the \$1.5 billion of education funding, that the department allocates specifically for post-secondary. I think you quote roughly \$300 million. In terms of that dollar amount, what's the method by which it is delivered to the students? How is it distributed?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** The Indian first funding does not go directly to students. It goes to first nations and Inuit administering organizations. So it's distributed across the country to Indian Affairs regional offices, which then distribute to the administering organizations.

There are a variety of formulas used in different regions. That kind of distribution to the first nations and Inuit administering organizations would typically happen through a discussion between the regional office and first nation organizations. So typically there's first nations input into that kind of allocation.

Generally there's a population basis for how the money comes to be distributed. Different regions use different kinds of calculations. Some might use an age-specific population basis; others might use a general Indian-register population basis. There's always a connection to some kind of population basis when they determine how the funding will be allocated to first nations and Inuit organizations.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** So it would leave Ottawa, go to a regional office, and then end up in the hands of, I think you said, another administrative organization.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** A first nation, usually, yes.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** So it would go directly, in theory, to a first nation. For instance, in Manitoba we have about 66 first nations. At the regional office, it would be broken down based on a formula that is specific to that regional office.

• (0945)

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Yes.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** And then it would flow to each of the first nations.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Yes.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** In theory, on an equal basis, dependent on the ratio?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** A population basis.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** On a population basis, okay.

From there, would it be specified as being only for post-secondary funding?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** The funding instruments with first nations don't operate that way. The current terms and conditions of the program don't require that. If the first nation finds that they have a certain demand and in fact have more post-secondary funding available than there is demand for, the first nation has the capacity to transfer that amount of money into other of its priorities.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** For instance, they have perhaps a secondary school that needs to be built or perhaps they need to fund some infrastructure in the community.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** They could certainly put it into school operations, elementary or secondary school operations, yes.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** If a community doesn't have the demand that you're talking about, in terms of students who actually need the money, but they have received the cash based on this ratio according to the population, they could take that money and spend it elsewhere.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Yes.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Whereas the community next door that happens to have the demand, actually demand above and beyond the ratio allocation of cash, they unfortunately wouldn't be able to fund all the students that they need to.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** That's right. That's obviously a problem.

One of our regions recently has been trying to figure out whether we can do an allocation on the basis of expenditures and then move money amongst first nations to where need might be greater. The terms and conditions of the program and the nature of the funding instruments to first nations do not require that this funding be spent only on post-secondary.

Now, that can change. If the terms and conditions of the program are changed, that can change. It can be delivered in a way so that it would be required to be spent on post-secondary education. We do this in other areas such as special education, for instance. That funding is targeted, is required to be spent in that area. If we were to change the terms and conditions of the program, that could be changed.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** I like many of the approaches to life of some of my colleagues who are chiefs—friends, I would say—and one of them is that they prefer not to have more bureaucracy employed on them. I think that would be the challenge, identifying a methodology that can help ensure that the money gets through to students who actually need it, but at the same time, not adding more paperwork to communities that are really drowning in paperwork already. I see that as one of the biggest challenges facing the requirement of post-secondary for first nation communities.

Mr. Chair, do I have more time?

**The Chair:** No, you don't.

Mr. Merasty.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Taking the example that was given, to what level of incidence do you think the situation described by Mr. Bruinooge occurs across the country, in which the money is taken in theory and may be applied to other areas?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** That's not something we would have any information on. We don't require that first nations do that kind of reporting.

• (0950)

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Would it be fair to say that it is not widespread?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** I have absolutely no way of answering that question.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Could I answer there? I think the only reason it wouldn't be spent is where, as I discussed earlier, one of the problems is getting enough kids graduating out of grade 12. In order to know how much you're going to need on post-secondary, you actually have to have some students who are going to be able to be admitted into post-secondary institutions. You could have circumstances where you had one first nation that didn't need everything it had and so it didn't use it. We know there are other first nations that have big demands.

So I would say this is not a matter of misusing funds; it's that, in order to be able to use post-secondary funds, an individual community has to have students it can fund. If it doesn't have any, then it could use it for kindergarten to grade 12, or something like that.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Then it's also fair to say—Mr. Lemay was reading from the briefing book that was provided to us, and looking at other briefings—it is an overall trend that there is not enough money in the system right now to meet the demand for post-secondary funding. I have some graphs that tell me very clearly that although in the report you say there has been significant investment, and there has been that 2% growth, the population has far outstripped that growth in the demand. We're seeing, in 1990, 2% enrolment of first nations in post-secondary and the Canadian population with 6% enrolment, to now 16%, and we're at 5%. In approximately 1994-95, the first nation enrolment went up to about 6.5%, and it has been dropping because the growth of the population is causing a net decline in the actual enrolments overall. To me, that suggests a huge problem. Would you agree with that?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** We believe there probably is insufficient money, and the value of that money over time, as you suggested, is declining because costs are going up.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** That's good.

**The Chair:** Ms. Karetak-Lindell.

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** First of all, thank you for coming.

I have a pretty specific question, but I'm very troubled by the tone of the whole report in that “first nations and Inuit” seems to be interchangeably used throughout the whole report in areas where I don't think it's necessarily accurate.

One of the difficulties I always have in dealing with any reports is that people tend to believe “first nations” means all aboriginal people in Canada, and it doesn't. Throughout your report, you keep referring to “first nations and Inuit communities”. Then when you get specific, you say “first nations”, and that excludes Inuit.

I'm looking at page 2, where you talk about the ISSP money. I know you said Iqaluit regional office does not get any of that money, but you also said there are Inuit who have taken advantage of the Indian studies support program.

I know, for example, the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program that's here today doesn't access that money. We're trying to find out how that can be trickled so that groups such as this very successful program can actually access the support they deserve, because they don't get support from that.

As far as I know, because Nunavut does not get any through their regional office, they haven't been able to access it. I'd really like specifics on Inuit receiving money through that program, because I don't believe they do.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** We know that Avataq Cultural Centre in northern Quebec has received ISSP money. I'm not absolutely certain about this, but I think in the past Labrador Inuit have received ISSP money also. So we know that in at least one example south of 60° that I'm certain of, Inuit organizations have received ISSP money. But the situation north of 60° has been different because of the way that post-secondary student funding has come from the territorial governments and not from the federal government. So that's something we have to look at very seriously, because this problem has been identified, and figure out a way of fixing.

• (0955)

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** We shall move on to the government side.

Mr. Albrecht, please.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to each of the witnesses for appearing today.

I want to follow up on a comment by Mr. Lemay. I think he was referring to the audit of the post-secondary student program that was done by the department audit and evaluation branch, assisted by PricewaterhouseCoopers. On page two of that report there are some troubling findings in relation to the use of the funds.

I'm going to read directly from the report. It says:

significant PSSSP funds are spent on activities that do not fall within the scope of the program, and monitoring of performance indicators could be improved.

It goes on to say:

data was found to be present in First Nations files that would permit the department to more effectively manage [those resources] if appropriate processes were to be put in place.

Then it goes on to talk about establishment of controls, compliance with controls, and program results.

And then the final paragraph on page three says:

In addition, the audit revealed a lack of enforcement of the requirement set out in the Year End Reporting Handbook that First Nations are to include detailed program schedules in their audited reports. This has a direct impact on the ability of the department to carry out adequate monitoring....

It goes on, but I don't want to take a lot of time.

I think all of us in this room, and especially the students, who are going to be the ultimate recipients of these funds, are eager to have

these kinds of monitoring processes established and followed, because that helps us all in the end. So I would hope that in the near future we'd have some more adequate monitoring of things put into place.

And then, as the last sentence says, "...efforts to rectify the situation have been limited and do not appear to carry authority." I think that's a concern for all of us as well.

That's more of a comment. My question specifically relates to the availability of funding for aboriginal students. Are all aboriginal students eligible to apply for the Canadian student loans program, as are other Canadians?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Yes.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** I thought that was the answer.

I'd like to follow up a bit on the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program. I was one of the committee members who thoroughly enjoyed my time there and was impressed by the program there. I understand that at this point funding is not available through the ISSP program. Could you outline for us what the criteria are for institutions accessing those funds? Maybe even more simply, why wouldn't NS be eligible?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** From what I know of the type of organization NS is and the type of program they're offering, which I learned from the transcripts of their testimony here, there is no reason why it would not be eligible, on the face of it.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** So there is a chance that if they were given the access to the application process other institutions have, they would at least be competing on a level playing field.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** I should think so, yes.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We still have a couple of minutes.

Mr. Blaney.

[Translation]

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to the representatives of the Department of Indian Affairs. I think your presentation described the programs you offer very well. As was mentioned earlier, the people in Nunavut we visited gave us a clear example of what a success story means.

The challenge of education is important for young people. Next week, several members of the committee will be going to Mashteuiatsh for the First Nations' Socio-economic Forum. Education will be one of the four themes discussed. As you briefly mentioned, Ms. Cram, defining the problems properly is one of the challenges that arise. I think there are many reports indeed, but here we're talking about statistics that enable us to assess the needs with a view to the budget.

You talked about the challenges in collecting data, for example, the difficulty of determining the number of graduates within communities or translating the existing needs in financial terms.

Can you tell us more about those challenges?

•(1000)

**Ms. Christine Cram:** The data we need right now are not those necessary to forecast needs. Right now, we have information on spending, but we don't have any on the number of students whose request regarding post-secondary education could not be accepted by the committee. As I mentioned, there is a lack of data in this regard. We were not in a position to make budget forecasts up until now.

[English]

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Just to add to what my colleague is saying, Indian Affairs does not collect information on the number of eligible students who are otherwise denied funding. If that were to be collected, that would mean there would be another requirement from Indian Affairs to first nations to collect that information and aggregate it and submit it. We're conscious, among other things, about the burden—and one of your colleagues has referred to this—that is put on first nations in terms of our needing this piece of information or that piece of information. It has to be seriously considered whether this is information we feel we need regionally, nationally, on a first nations level, and it would come through an agreement with first nations, ultimately, that we all believe this should be collected. In a number of cases, we find that we do not always have the right information.

**The Chair:** We're out of time here.

We move on to Monsieur Lévesque.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since I have very little time, I will put all my questions to you in random order. You can answer them afterwards.

In the last paragraph of page 3 of your speaking notes, you state this:

Despite the large increase over several decades in the number of post-secondary students supported, post-secondary attainment rates for First Nations and Inuit do not yet match those of other Canadians.

In this regard, I'd like to know whether the customs and languages of the students are used where post-secondary education is provided.

In the second complete paragraph on page 4, you state:

His main finding is that there is a pressing need to address the very low Aboriginal high school graduation rates in order to increase participation rates among First Nations—

Certain persons who have appeared before this committee talked about the subject. For years now, the situation has been denounced. Don't you think that the attendance rate and the success rate of young people in elementary and high schools would be better if they had a more conventional family life?

I'm a little bit angry to see that what's been generally recommended here is an extension in the duration of the university and college preparatory program. These people are just as intelligent as we are. If we give them an opportunity to study under normal conditions, we will not need to extend the duration of their studies.

What leaves me truly perplexed is to hear that you have no control over the money that you distribute to communities to help students at the post-secondary level. Could I go into one of these communities

and buy a truck with the money earmarked for post-secondary education? There's really no connection between the two.

As my colleague already asked you, what are you waiting for to implement the recommendations contained in the Pricewaterhouse-Coopers' report? You would then have at least partial control over spending, community needs and programs.

•(1005)

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Thank you. You have asked several questions; I will try to answer them.

First of all, I would like to talk about success stories. According to Mr. Mendelson's studies, Aboriginals who undertake post-secondary studies succeed just as well as non-Aboriginals. The difference in rate is because of the fact that in terms of percentage, there are fewer Aboriginals who attend post-secondary institutions. It is a lot less than non-Aboriginals. However, once they do attend these institutions, they have the same success rate.

We would like to see pre-university years because that some schools on the reserves are not as strong as others. That is why the ministries are working to increase the level of teaching from grades 4 to 12. Sometimes, youth who finish grade 12 are not well enough equipped to be admitted to post-secondary institutions. This is especially true in math and sciences. One of the reasons for this is that it is difficult to hire teachers in communities that are located far from major urban centres. The same is true in rural communities across the country; it is difficult to hire high-level teachers in all schools.

Let us talk about the importance of language and culture. We recognize this is very important. The Indian Study Support Program does exist. This gives an opportunity to improve the program on languages and culture, because we know that it is important for success.

There are not sufficient control measures, but we have not seen any cases of ineligible people receiving money. That problem does not exist. The problem is that if the community responds to all existing needs, it cannot use the surplus for other purposes. It will not give the funds to someone who is ineligible.

I do not know if I have answered all your questions.

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Chairman, do I still have some time? I would like to remind the lady that we have met some people here. They were lucky, because they had the funds that enabled them to pursue their education. Others had also attained this level, but there were no funds available to send them to a post-secondary institution. Most of the witnesses stated that. There is a lack of funds to allow everyone to pursue post-secondary education. The witness did not answer the following question: when do you think the committee will become operational?

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm not going to let you answer that question, because we have to move on to the government side.

Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Thank you.

Following up on Monsieur Lévesque's point, even though I've been in government for about eight months now, it's still sometimes challenging to understand all of the models that are employed to be able to deliver funding. Hopefully one of these days soon I'll be able to understand it as well as some of my colleagues around the table and, I'm sure, all of you people.

Perhaps you could explain to me, in relation to what Mr. Lévesque was talking about, how funds are allocated to most of our Inuit citizens via the model that's been devolved to that new territory. Is post-secondary funding a part of that devolution in terms of it now being the responsibility of the new territory?

• (1010)

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Of course the relationship between the federal government and first nations is different from the relationship between the federal government and Inuit. We have an Indian Act, which dictates a great deal of the relationship with first nations. For Inuit, it depends very much on the jurisdiction they live in. But in the territories there's an intergovernmental agreement, the territorial funding formula, that provides funding from the federal government for the expenditures of territorial governments. That ultimately helps to finance the post-secondary funding that the Government of Nunavut or the Government of the Northwest Territories administers. For Inuit south of 60, the post-secondary funding is administered through their land claims organizations. For instance, where I'm from in Labrador, the funding is administered by the now-called Nunatsiavut Government, the Labrador Inuit land claims institution. That funding comes from Indian and Northern Affairs directly and is incorporated into the funding agreement connected to the land claims agreement. It is a much more direct system than that with Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

But south of 60 and in fact for Nunavut and Northwest Territories Inuit who are no longer permanent residents of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, those people are in fact eligible for Indian Affairs-financed post-secondary assistance. And there's a group of administering organizations. There is an administering organization in every region south of 60 that is responsible to provide funding to Inuit who are no longer resident in the territories. So it's complicated.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** With respect to the direct funding that you spoke of, is that administered directly by the department?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** No, it's done by administering organizations.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Is it incumbent upon them to provide any accounting for how they spend those funds, such as in terms of the number of students they're funding?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Yes, it is, the same as with any other administering organization. It's the same as with a first nations administering organization, for instance.

**The Chair:** The chair would like to ask a question.

To me, the question that is going around here is this. If the aboriginal leadership set post-secondary education as a priority, is there enough funding to meet the need?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** I guess my answer is that we would suspect the \$305 million we currently have for post-secondary education is probably insufficient. What we don't know is how much would be.

**The Chair:** Then this would be the next question. What is the department going to do to determine that?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** That's why we need to work on a management framework, because we need to be able to have the information necessary to be able to do some estimating of what's needed.

**The Chair:** What are the timelines for that to be done?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** We have committed to completing our management framework—and this is for all areas of education, not just post-secondary—by June 2007. That then leads into the renewal of the program authorities, which has to happen by March 31, 2008.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I've run out of time.

Madam Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I wonder if you could have more clarity of language, because on page 3 of your report, you talk about 5% of aboriginal individuals 15 years of age or older, and later on you talk about aboriginal people attained college yet. In most of your document, you talk about first nations and Inuit.

My understanding is that the numbers are different for first nations and Inuit than they are for aboriginals. So I think it actually obscures the problem for first nations and Inuit peoples, both accessing and completing education. I don't think you can provide that data today. This has come up before from department officials, where you talk throughout your documents about first nations, and then you flip into aboriginal because the numbers look slightly better. That's just a comment.

You don't have the data to talk about students who are turned down, but I suspect you also don't have the data on students who don't even apply, because of what we call sticker shock. I used to work in a university college system, and many students simply don't apply because the costs are so prohibitive for them. So it's not that they're turned down, they just don't apply. I know that the Assembly of First Nations has asked for resources to help them work with the data, and they've also asked for complete data from the department, which they don't currently get. That's more of a comment.

There have been a number of reports recommending that the department move in the direction of supporting first nations educational institutions—stand-alone institutions. I wonder if you could comment on what the department's philosophy is and what they're doing to support it.

Secondly, what is the department doing specifically around supporting and promoting trades training for first nations and Inuit—not just aboriginal?

So please comment on those two.

•(1015)

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** In terms of supporting first nations post-secondary institutions specifically, the ISSP program now supports about 55 institutions.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I'm sorry, but those aren't stand-alone institutions. I'm talking about stand-alone first nations educational institutions, because some work has been done in places such as New Zealand that talks about the success of stand-alone first nations educational institutions.

With all respect, the ISSP does not provide the capital, the infrastructure, and the operation and maintenance on an ongoing basis, which is really what's needed for institutions, right?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** With the exception of First Nations University.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Right, which is in Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** We certainly had reports and interventions from institutions themselves, and in fact we have a relationship with the National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning, NAIHIL, that advocate with us in relation to supporting aboriginal stand-alone institutions. But we haven't come down with a decision about whether we would want to support operations for the expenses of those kinds of institutions. It's currently not permitted under the ISSP.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** And the trades?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Trades training predominantly comes through the AHRDAs from Human Resources and Social Development Canada, and it's actually been a very successful program. As I mentioned in the data, there is a high percentage of aboriginal—

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Aboriginal, but what about first nations and Inuit?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** I don't have the data for first nations in particular, other than as a subset, and we'll have to look at that data. But there are very successful AHRDA agreements supporting that kind of training.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** But they're not eligible under PSSSP for trades training.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** The relationship between AHRDA funding and the Indian Affairs post-secondary funding is something that we think we have to work on to ensure there is no duplication. That way the funding utilized in first nations and Inuit communities is optimal.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** There doesn't seem to be much communication between the departments on it.

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** It's fair to say that there hasn't been.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Russell.

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome.

God, where do we start? First, with NS. I would think there's consensus around the committee. Can one of you meet with somebody from NS to go over this program to maybe talk about a path forward? It's something that needs to be supported. I'm only

throwing it out as a suggestion, but come on, somebody needs to sit down to talk to try to sort this matter out. We're supporting the program. Make it work for them. I'm sure there's flexibility.

Now, the other question is this. It's 25 years next year since the Métis were included in the Constitution in 1982. There was not one mention of Métis in this presentation. There's absolutely no inclusion of the Métis in any of these particular programs.

I have a couple of questions. What does the department regard as its legal obligations to Métis in the realm of education? What does the department regard as its policy obligations to Métis with respect to education? In your renewal and in your restructuring or reassessments, is there any talk, any formulation of policy that would include Métis under post-secondary education programming—not to take away from others, but to build a more inclusive program with the requisite funding?

•(1020)

**Mr. Allan MacDonald (Director General, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** I guess that one's for me.

Mr. Russell, thank you for the question.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** You came for a reason, Allan.

**Mr. Allan MacDonald:** Thanks for that.

There are a couple of things. To state the obvious, there is no post-secondary program for Métis similar to those for first nations. I can't say what the underlying reasons for that are, but I can surmise, I think.

Traditionally, the federal government is of the view that, notwithstanding the fact that Métis are in the Constitution, for the most part our legal and constitutional responsibilities are much greater towards first nations as distinct from Métis. That's one of the legal underpinnings, and it informs our policy choices.

Having said that, while there's no direct support, as there is with first nations for first nations students, there is some indirect support that goes to Métis students to support their access to post-secondary education. The federal government a number of years ago helped to capitalize the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, with about \$12 million. We know that Métis are heavy users of the bursaries and scholarships that institution grants.

We know as well through the AHRDA program that Métis institutions have created their own granting institutions and partnerships with provinces and universities to assist Métis students to get access to post-secondary education. In no way does that compare with the scale and scope on which Indian Affairs works with first nations, but it is some kind of indirect support that the federal government supplies for Métis kids.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** As a direct follow-up question, are there any papers being developed, or is any consideration being given to Métis being included under post-secondary education programs under Indian Affairs or the OFI?

**Mr. Allan MacDonald:** I'll let the post-secondary renewal people answer a part of that question, but I can say that we have been, I guess "lobbied" is the word, by the Métis National Council to continue providing support to the institutions they've set up. There is some consideration of those proposals within government, within OFI, and government will have to make a decision as to how it wants to proceed on this.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Ms. Cram.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** In terms of the other part of the question, whether we are looking at expanding the eligibility criteria, if I'm understanding the question, of the post-secondary education program to include Métis, I would say we're not. That's not under consideration right now.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** I guess we will recommend as a committee—well, I hope we'll recommend as a committee—that you undertake that and be directed to undertake it.

How about you? Do you want to add something, Mr. Budgell?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** I'll just go back to your first question: can one of us meet with people from NS? I'd be delighted to, and we will work at figuring something out.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, you're very concise today. That was great.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Today? I was hoping you were going to have a concise term in office, but anyway....

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell:** Mr. Chair, how much time did he have left?

**The Chair:** He had, actually, 30 seconds.

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell:** Here's a 30-second question, then. I notice there's someone here from the Inuit relations secretariat. My question is, in some of the questions we're asking here, is part of your responsibility to make sure that there are Inuit-specific angles in the programs within INAC?

• (1025)

**Ms. Mary Oates (Senior Advisor, Inuit Relations Secretariat, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Yes. One of the purposes of the secretariat is to inform the department and Canada regarding the needs and interests of Inuit. I have met with the office of the federal interlocutor. I have met with, not Mr. Budgell, but other elements of his team to talk about K to 12 and post-secondary education. We continue to work on the same committees and issues.

As with government it's always slow going, but we're making progress.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Albrecht.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Chair, I want to follow up on my previous question regarding Canada student loans. Do we have any

idea of the number of aboriginal students who would apply or what kind of rates they would have in terms of approvals and that sort of thing? Is it small? Is it a very small percentage?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** We don't know. They're not able to track that kind of information. I know that from having met with them. They're not able to track that kind of information because they are not permitted to ask applicants about their cultural identity. So they do not know how many aboriginal people are using their program or applying in the program.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** I would assume, however, that if they're not allowed to share that, the application form would ensure that there's no duplication of funding for the same student, so that part is taken care of.

Another question relates to the ISSP, as it relates to the 12% cap. Could you tell me how that was arrived at, how long it has been in place, and is it possible that it needs to be adjusted, perhaps even downward, with the increased mobility of our population today in terms of accessing funding at any institution as opposed to making it institution-specific?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** I don't know when it was introduced. It's in the current terms and conditions of the program. It doesn't go back many decades, that 12% cap, although it goes back some time. We can check for you.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** But that's the sort of thing that could be adjusted after you do this framework study and see what the demands are for the various—

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** I would just point out that we know, just on expenditures, that we were spending about \$20 million in the past year, and in fact, that is not 12% of overall expenditures; it's considerably less than 12% of overall expenditures.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Has the demand been less, or has the demand for the other been so great that you haven't had the funds?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** It could be either of those.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Or both?

**Mr. Richard Budgell:** Yes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Thank you for appearing before us this morning.

You have painted quite a realistic picture and in some respect, it is encouraging. However, I am concerned by the fact that it is possible that a student in a given community can apply and that the application be turned down because there is not sufficient funding. That bothers me a lot and we have to find mechanisms to solve this. I am sure that the current funds are properly managed, but I think we have noted here today and we have read in your documents that we must find some way to improve the financial management methods.

You said that there is more and more needs. We are going to have to find extra funding. That is more or less the situation. I am thinking of the statistics that Chief Ghislain Picard mentioned: in Quebec, half of all adults have not finished Secondary V. Therefore, there is a lot of room for improvement. Having said that, we are eager to see how you are going to apply the recommendations to increase the Secondary V success rate and support post-secondary education.

I thank you for coming today.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** Did you ask me what we were going to do?

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** I simply made a comment, but you can add whatever you wish.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** That is fine, thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We're just about finished here. I'll ask the committee members whether they have exhausted their questions.

Mr. Lemay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** I have a very brief question.

• (1030)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Have you exhausted the questions, or would you like to ask one?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** My question will be very brief.

Madam, we find here: "Post-Secondary Education Programs - National Program Guidelines - Indian and Northern Affairs Canada - November 2003". Don't you have everything in this document that you need to answer our questions and implement control measures to ensure greater presence of Aboriginal and Inuit peoples in post-secondary institutions?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** No.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Why?

**Ms. Christine Cram:** This is a guide for the program that deals with eligibility, but there is no management system, or framework for management control in that document. That's why it is necessary to do more work in this area and update this guide.

[*English*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** *Merci.*

That was short, wasn't it?

**The Chair:** Yes, very good.

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank the department and the witnesses for a great presentation and great answers. It's obvious to me, and I'm encouraged by the fact, that you are so fluid in what you're doing and are adjusting to the needs of the department and the aboriginal people. I really appreciate it. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Christine Cram:** *Merci beaucoup.* Thank you.

**The Chair:** Committee, I'm going to suspend for two minutes so that you can freshen up.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

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• (1035)

**The Chair:** Committee, we set some time aside in this meeting to deal with the notice of motion from Madam Neville that is before you.

Madam Neville, do you have something to say?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. That was a very long two minutes, if I might comment.

I appreciate having the opportunity to move the motion that's in the notice of motion before you. It is a notice of motion that, as you see, is asking the government to pledge its support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I'm asking that it be adopted as a report of this committee and that you present the report to the House.

I know that all members of the committee are—and I don't want to belabour the discussion—aware of the resolution. I know all members of the committee are aware of its importance to all aboriginal communities in the country.

I have before me a news release that was sent out yesterday, I think, by the AFN, the ITK, and the Métis National Council indicating the support of all indigenous peoples for the early adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I'm not going to go into the merits of it. If it's necessary in the debate to do so, I will be pleased to. I just want to reaffirm that this is an aspirational declaration; it is not a binding declaration. It is an aspirational declaration worldwide, to improve the living conditions and to ensure the rights of indigenous peoples throughout the world.

As you are aware, Mr. Chair, in the vote taken at the UN Human Rights Council, Canada and Russia were the only two countries that voted against this declaration. Given their 20 years of work on behalf of the Government of Canada, I believe it was an insult to all those involved in the developing of it, and we're asking the government to reconsider its position as the matter goes forward to the General Assembly.

I'll conclude there.

• (1040)

**The Chair:** Is there any opening discussion?

Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** I guess my initial comment would be that I feel this motion has changed substantively since it was first brought up. In light of the fact that I'm really seeing this for the first time with its changes, I feel it requires the 48-hour notice that is incumbent upon this committee under all the rules we're following.

It would be my recommendation that once the 48 hours have been met, this committee could then proceed with further discussion on it.

**The Chair:** I'm going to let Madam Neville respond to that.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Chairman, this motion has not changed substantively. The clerk asked if he could change the wording from "mandating it" to "pledging its support" to make it more compatible with parliamentary procedure, and I agreed. This was done at the instigation of the clerk, not me, and members have had an opportunity to look at this for some time.

The intent has been clear. The clerk wanted to ensure that it was consistent with all procedures in the House of Commons, and I agreed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, going from “adopt” to “recommend”—I believe that is what she's talking about in terms of having it be a mandated position for government versus recommending it—I feel is substantive. As such, I believe it is entirely incumbent upon us to have the 48-hour notice be put in place.

**The Chair:** It's the obligation of the chair to make a decision on this.

I believe the intent and the substance of the motion haven't been altered by the minor changes in the wording. So I'll let the discussion continue.

I'll turn to Mrs. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I want to speak in support of this motion. I think it's an important statement for Canada to make. The draft declaration for indigenous peoples was 20 years in the making.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** On a point of order, the House has been cleared, they think, of fire, but there is no news yet. Do not head over to the centre block. I just got that.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, I think we should immediately cancel the meeting. I believe that we should probably take a look into this, seriously. Where is the fire?

• (1045)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** It's not in this building. It's in the centre block.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** They just said don't go over there. That's all.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** But I'm saying, we should probably look into this. I have some staff, colleagues, I'm just saying that—who knows what the reason is for this? Everyone is just going to sit here.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** We know what your reason is.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Oh, really, you think so?

**The Chair:** I will ask a staff person to investigate and find out for us.

I do this as a precaution, committee, just in case it is something that is more than what we might think.

Madam Crowder, continue, please.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Actually we have very good staff who will let us know if we have to duck, roll, and hide.

I want to reaffirm the NDP support for this motion. I think it's an important statement for Canada to make on the international stage. We are often looked to for our human rights record, although we have been castigated over the last few years on a number of different conventions. I think it would be an important statement for us to make internationally and domestically about reaffirming our commitment to indigenous rights, so I am in full support of this motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Blaney.

[Translation]

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

I think that a declaration is always quite important. I had the opportunity to read excerpts from a conference where many people spoke, including former prime minister and Mr. Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations. There was also the leader of the Bloc Québécois. This declaration does merit examination as does the motion. I am not sure what each member area of expertise and experience is, but I don't think that the committee has had a chance to take a look at this issue.

So quite humbly, I would put to you that at the very least, it would certainly be very interesting to know the position of our government's negotiators and other stakeholders, if only for one or two hearings, in order to better understand what is at stake here. I submit this to you because I think that before our committee makes any kind of commitment, even though we may all have some preconceived notions in this regard, it would be important for us to clearly demonstrate what this is based on, what the motivations are. I think that any overly hasty decision would arm the credibility of any decision presented to the House by this committee.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemay, and then I'll go to Mr. Albrecht.

Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** The Bloc Québécois' position is clear: we will vote in favour of Ms. Neville's motion for several different reasons. The United Nations Declaration on the right of indigenous peoples is a document that has been studied for more than four years. The current government has been aware of this for at least a year, especially since a vote was held on a Bloc motion regarding a draft declaration in June. This motion was adopted on division by the same committee.

Having said that, this is a political issue, and the government must assume its responsibilities and decide what it wants to do about this political issue. For our part, it is quite clear that we would like a debate in the House of Commons on this topic. That is why we support this motion and we would like it to be adopted today. Thus, we could discuss it and debate it in the House of Commons directly.

I would like to inform you however, that there will be a vote at the UN General Assembly around December and that any delay in discussing this motion would unduly delay Canada's position which, to my mind, should be to vigorously defend this declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Albrecht.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Chair, I don't think there's any disagreement on the fact that all of us around this table want to move forward in terms of improving the lot of aboriginal peoples, not only in this country but around the world. But it is clear that successive governments have struggled with the wording of this document, and this particular motion is very specific about “the United Nations Declaration”. I would propose an amendment, Mr. Chair, that would change the word “the United Nations” to “a United Nations Declaration”, so we continue to work on this and move ahead.

The other may be a separate amendment, but I'd like you to rule. I don't like the word "immediately". That's rather vague. What does that mean? I would simply strike that word completely and replace the word "the" with "a".

•(1050)

**The Chair:** Mr. Albrecht, what was your second amendment?

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** I would strike the word "the" and replace it with "a" and strike the word "immediately" totally from the motion. That's my motion to amend.

**The Chair:** Could you say where you're going to take the "the" out?

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** In front of "United Nations".

**The Chair:** I have an amendment on the motion, so we can debate the amendment.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** There's nothing to debate, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any comments from Mr. Blaney?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** If I understand correctly, in the French version, we would delete the word "immédiatement". Moreover we would replace the expression "un appui à la déclaration" by "un appui à une déclaration". That is what I understand in the proposed motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Is that the end of the debate?

Does the amendment carry?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Call the vote.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Call the vote on this amendment.

(Amendment negatived)

**The Chair:** Is there any more debate on the motion?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** I would ask for the vote on the main motion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chairman, we have an additional amendment that we'd like to put forward.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, let me point out that the vote on the main motion has been requested.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'll hear the amendment.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chairman, we'd like to, after the word "recommend", add "after hearing witnesses from this committee concerning the adopting of...". This is in relation to how we, as a committee, need to further study the UN draft declaration, as we haven't had any witnesses previously. We haven't had any department individuals giving us an overview of this.

I think it's incumbent upon us as a committee to provide that to ourselves, as we clearly need that in order to make an informed decision and make this move forward as a government recommendation.

**The Chair:** Is there further discussion on the amendment?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Please close it, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Is there any further discussion?

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Chair, it appears to me that on something of this significance, it's important that the people who are currently sitting around this table have adequately studied that project. It's true that this has been under consideration by successive governments. At this point there are a number of people around this table who have not had the opportunity to study it in detail.

We have not, as Mr. Bruinooge has pointed out, had our department in to give their recommendations as to the wording changes they've suggested. We haven't even heard that. How can we in good conscience move ahead as a committee and recommend to the House that we pledge our support to something we don't even know in detail what we're pledging to. We haven't heard our departmental officials give us a recommendation. I think that's irresponsible, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Blaney.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** I get back to Mr. Lemay's statement. It is true that this declaration is of a political nature, but it is an important one. I submitted a proposal a little earlier, because we are talking about responsibility that transcends party lines, we are talking about committing the government of Canada through an international declaration and we are talking about presenting it to the House. There are certainly some elements of this that could be the topic of a debate, with convincing arguments. I think that the committee's resolution would carry a lot more weight if it was not presented to Parliament out of the blue, without having been debated in committee. I think that would affect the credibility of the motion, Mr. Chairman.

Again, very humbly, I think that it would be important to debate this motion and hear witnesses, if only for one or two meetings, in order to better understand what is at stake in this declaration, on the one hand. On the other hand, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that next Thursday it will be the First Nations Socio-Economic Forum. Many representatives of various parties won't be here. It will be important that those representatives be here, or at least we should assess whether it would not be appropriate... That is when we must decide on the recommendations for the evaluation of secondary and post-secondary education. Perhaps we have to look at the calendar and determine when it would be possible to hear various representatives.

•(1055)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We're off the subject, Mr. Blaney.

Mr. Russell.

[Translation]

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** I would like to finish if you allow me. It think that an institution of this importance must receive witnesses who make clear presentations. Government negotiators have taken a position on this declaration. I think it is important to understand how this position was negotiated with international bodies. You were here before; you know that this is not a partisan issue. What is at stake here and how did Canada come up with the position it did? I think, Mr. Chairman, that it is important to say so before the committee, because this debate, this discussion, has not taken place yet.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Russell.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Regarding the amendment, the amendment really doesn't alter the motion at all. All it says is that after hearing witnesses we will do exactly what the motion proposed in the first place, which is pledge our support. That's what the amendment says: "...after hearing witnesses, the government immediately pledge its support for the United Nations Declaration...". There will be no change in the declaration; we're talking about the one that's currently before us. The amendment only says that "after hearing witnesses" we will do exactly what the motion says. That's all the amendment does.

In that regard, I think people can educate themselves around this particular issue. I would say strike the amendment.

Let's vote on the amendment.

**The Chair:** Are we ready to vote on the amendment?

(Amendment negatived)

**The Chair:** Going back to the main motion—

**Hon. Anita Neville:** On the main motion, I'm calling the question, please.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, I have another amendment. It's in relation to replacing the words after "Development" with "study reasons why successive governments, including Liberal governments led by Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, did not support previous versions of the United Nations draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples".

I think this is a key point, in the sense that it's been referenced by my honourable colleague Madam Neville, that this is something that's been agreed upon for some 20 years; yet we know that her government of the past, led by former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and former Prime Minister Paul Martin, didn't concur with the text of the draft declaration. In fact, they had many of the same areas of concern that we as a new government have. Of course, this is in relation to key parts of the draft declaration.

**The Chair:** Would you give the chair the amendment?

Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, I think that this amendment is out of order. Mr. Bruinooge must table a new motion. The amendment completely changes the nature of the motion we have before us and the chair should not accept it.

[English]

**The Chair:** I haven't heard the amendment clearly. I would like to hear the amendment clearly so that I can make a decision on it.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Let's take a look at the text of Madam Neville's motion: "That the Standing Committee of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development adopt the resolution that the government immediately pledge their support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; that this be adopted as a report of this committee; that the chair present the report to the House."

You would then go back to "Development". At that point, everything after "Development" would be replaced with: "study reasons for which successive governments, including Liberal governments led by former Prime Minister Paul Martin and former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, did not support previous versions of the United Nations draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

• (1100)

**The Chair:** The substance of the motion is altered by that, so I concur with the challenge by Mr. Lemay.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, I have another amendment.

**The Chair:** We are out of time.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Chair, I would like to go on record as saying that I asked for a full debate on this. You advised me that there would be sufficient time to debate it. This matter has been put over at a number of meetings. We allowed half an hour of time. We in fact had 20 minutes of time.

This is a time-sensitive motion, and we're clearly seeing the will of the majority of the committee to proceed with this motion, and a series of obstructionist amendments coming from members opposite. What I am asking is for a real opportunity to deal with this motion in a timely manner, because it is important to communities from coast to coast to coast across this country.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Chairman, as it is almost 11 o'clock, here's my recommendation. I propose there be no meeting on October 26, given that the First Nations Socio-Economic Forum is taking place in Mashteuiatsh and that therefore, on October 31, we dedicate the first hour from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. to giving direction to our analysts for the drafting of our report and that during the second hour, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., we examine Ms. Neville's motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** What is the pleasure of the committee?

Actually, the clerk and I have discussed this, and there is an opportunity on Tuesday, October 31, as Mr. Lemay has said, to discuss this issue, from 10 to 11 o'clock on October 31.

Is it agreed by the committee?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Then so be it.

Mr. Lemay has suggested that we cancel the Thursday meeting of October 26 to accommodate the conference that's happening in Quebec. What is the pleasure of the committee?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Recognizing, Mr. Chair, that it may be very difficult for some of us logistically to be there, speaking for this side, we will make every effort to be there, but there are a number of challenges.

**The Chair:** But is there a willingness of the committee to suspend that meeting to accommodate those who will attend?

Mr. Blaney.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** I welcome Mr. Lemay's proposal, but I'd like to say that if we have an hour of sterile discussions without anything new being said, I would propose—I am coming back to this subject—to Ms. Neville, who had moved the motion...

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We're running out of time, so just keep it—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** We have to hear witnesses who are familiar with what is at stakes in this declaration and who will speak on behalf of the government. That is what I propose.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We have agreed.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We will suspend the meeting of October 26, and on October 31 we'll have the last hour as an opportunity to debate the motion as is.

We're adjourned.

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