

COMMISSIONER'S REMARKS
EVIDENTIARY HEARINGS CLOSING
August 24, 2006

- GOOD MORNING.

- TODAY MARKS THE CONCLUSION OF THE EVIDENTIARY HEARING PHASE OF OUR INQUIRY.

- ALTHOUGH THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE EVIDENTIARY HEARINGS HAS BEEN TO INVESTIGATE THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF DUDLEY GEORGE, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY VIEW THAT A PUBLIC INQUIRY MAY SERVE PURPOSES BEYOND THOSE EXPLICITLY SET OUT IN ITS ORDER IN COUNCIL.

- A PUBLIC INQUIRY CONTRIBUTES TO PUBLIC DEBATE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION; IT PROVIDES A FORUM FOR CITIZENS AND GROUPS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESOLUTION OF ISSUES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES CONCERNING MATTERS IN WHICH THEY HAVE A STAKE OR INTEREST.

- PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, A PUBLIC INQUIRY MAY SERVE AS A CATALYST FOR MOVING FORWARD BY INDIVIDUALS OR COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE EVENTS IN QUESTION.

- YOU MAY RECALL AT THE VERY OUTSET OF THESE PROCEEDINGS, I STATED THAT ONE OF MY BROADER GOALS WAS TO CONTRIBUTE TO RESTORING GOOD RELATIONS AMONG THE PEOPLE AFFECTED AND TO RESTORING THEIR FAITH IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT AND DEMOCRACY.

- WITH THIS GOAL IN MIND, I DECIDED TO INVITE ALL PARTIES AND THEIR COUNSEL TO COME TOGETHER ONE FINAL TIME TODAY TO CLOSE THIS CHAPTER OF EVENTS, IN A SPIRIT OF GOODWILL AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.
- I AM HAPPY TO WELCOME, LILLIAN PITAWANAKWAT, AN ELDER FROM WHITEFISH RIVER FIRST NATION, WHO OFFERED A TRADITIONAL PRAYER WHEN THESE PROCEEDINGS BEGAN. AT THAT TIME, MS. PITAWATIKWAT ALSO PRESENTED ME WITH A TALKING STICK THAT I HAVE KEPT ON MY DESK THROUGHOUT THE INQUIRY.
- I INTEND TO KEEP IT, ALONG WITH THE EAGLE FEATHER, AN ABORIGINAL SYMBOL OF TRUTH, THAT WAS GIVEN TO ME AT THE CHIEFS OF ONTARIO FORUM AND THAT NOW IS KEPT IN A VERY BEAUTIFUL TRADITIONAL CASE THAT WAS MADE BY SAM GEORGE'S WIFE, VERONICA.
- I AM PLEASED THAT DRUMMERS REPRESENTING THREE OF THE MAIN PARTIES TO THIS INQUIRY, THE CHIPPEWAS OF KETTLE AND STONY POINT, THE STONEY POINTERS AND THE OPP, ARE PRESENT THIS MORNING. THESE THREE DRUM GROUPS PARTICIPATED IN THE INDIGENIOUS KNOWLEDGE FORUM, ORGANIZED BY THE INQUIRY. AT THAT TIME, I VIEWED THEIR PARTICIPATION AS A VERY POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT THEY ARE HERE AGAIN TODAY.
- I HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE RESPONSE TO THIS INQUIRY FROM PARTIES AS WELL FROM THE PUBLIC. I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS TOWARDS FOSTERING OPEN DIALOGUE, BETTER RELATIONS AND UNDERSTANDING. MY HOPE

IS THAT THE IMPACT OF THESE IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS WILL BE DEEP AND LONG LASTING.

- THERE IS STILL MUCH TO DO, BUT THE TASK WILL BE EASIER IF THOSE INVOLVED UNDERTAKE IT IN A SPIRIT OF GOODWILL, MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING.
- BEFORE I CALL UPON MS. PITAWANAKWAT, I WANT TO RE-ITERATE MY APPRECIATION TO EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN INVOLVED WITH THIS PROCESS. I HAVE LEARNED A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT, AND I HOPE EVERYONE HAS.
- IT IS BEEN AN HONOUR AND A PRIVILEGE TO SERVE AS COMMISSIONER AND I SINCERELY THANK THE COMMUNITY, AND I ALSO THANK ALL PARTIES AND THEIR COUNSEL FOR THEIR DILIGENCE, PROFESSIONALISM AND CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORK OF THIS INQUIRY.
- THANK YOU.