



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

H10

Rose-Marie Ur, M.P.
Lambton - Middlesex

May 6, 1996

Mrs. Mary Lou LaPratte
R.R. #2, P.O. Box 25
Forest, Ontario
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Dear Mrs. LaPratte:

Thank you very much for your letter, dated April 18, in which you have sought clarification regarding a number of issues that are relevant to the various Ipperwash land disputes.

Let me say from the outset that I acknowledge your expressions of frustration with the pace of negotiations.

I must also reiterate that the province of Ontario is constitutionally responsible for policing at Ipperwash Provincial Park and for the administration of justice. As I am sure you know, a number of charges have been laid stemming from alleged incidents last year, and a number of court cases are pending.

The federal government can get involved in policing issues only if the Ontario government requests our assistance. This could involve either the RCMP or the Armed Forces, depending upon the nature of the Ontario government's request. I have enclosed, for your interest, a copy of Solicitor General Herb Gray's April 25 letter to me clarifying the extent of federal responsibility on policing matters.

The extent of the federal government's involvement in the resolution of the Ipperwash Provincial Park occupation is limited to point 5 of the September 13, 1995 Memorandum of Understanding that was jointly signed on behalf of the Government of Canada by Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin and John Adams, Assistant Deputy Minister of National Defence; and on behalf of the First Nation by Chief Tom Bressette and National Chief Ovide Mercredi (copy enclosed).

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As you can see, point 5 of the MOU obliges the federal government to provide research funding to investigate the First Nation's claim to a burial site at the Park, and its grievance surrounding the Park's creation. The Government of Ontario has also recognized the existence of 1937 documents pertaining to the existence of a burial site.

It is also my understanding the Ontario government is planning to appoint a special negotiator in the hope of finding a way to open the Park to the public as soon as possible. However, this person would not be involved with the negotiations over Camp Ipperwash which is clearly a federal responsibility.

According to my information, negotiations at Camp Ipperwash resumed today and will continue tomorrow. I am hopeful that the federal negotiator, Mr. Ralph Brant, and the Kettle and Stony Point negotiating team can make a real breakthrough in negotiations at this time.

As for the Pinery Provincial Park, on April 19, Maynard George served notice on Pinery Provincial Park officials that the province had 48 hours to respond to his request for an arrangement for the province to co-manage the park with his group. The province immediately responded by saying it has clear title to the park.

It should be noted that the actions of Mr. George have been condemned by area Native leaders and the national chief. Kettle and Stony Point Chief Tom Bressette, Chippewas of Sarnia Chief Phil Maness and Walpole Island Chief Joe Gilbert met recently with National Chief Ovide Mercredi and "unanimously condemned this individual, Maynard T. George."

In a News Release on this same matter, the chiefs said, "Many claims in this area are the common concern of all three First Nations and no one individual has the right to advance treaty claims based on their personal interpretations of historic fact."

I am hopeful that this whole matter relating to Pinery Provincial Park is now closed, and cooler heads will prevail. As you have correctly pointed out in your letter, there is a due to process that ~~must be honoured in all Aboriginal land claims.~~

On the matter of plummeting real estate values, the official position of the federal government is that it is in no way liable for or agreeable to financial compensation to third parties. However, I have continued to remind both Mr. Irwin and Mr. Collenette that this too was the initial position of the federal government in the wake of the 1990 Oka crisis, when the government was compelled to eventually revise its policy.

Thank you once again for conveying your legitimate concerns to me on these matters, and please rest assured that I will continue to push for a resolution that will restore a lasting peace to our communities.

Sincerely,

Rose-Marie

Rose-Marie Ur, M.P.
Lambton-Middlesex

Encl.