

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



**Résolution des questions des pensionnats indiens
Canada
Manchettes**

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October 4, 2006

Harper Gov't Delivering Actions Instead of Words

The StarPhoenix

Jim Prentice

In Future bleak for aboriginals under Harper, (SP, Sept. 29) columnist Doug Cuthand says: "We haven't seen any positive moves by the (Stephen) Harper government towards First Nations and aboriginal people."

From its first day in office, our government has been working hard to make a real difference in the lives of all aboriginal people. For example, we moved to bring First Nations' drinking water standards and systems up to par with the rest of Canada.

We have already taken significant steps to enable First Nations to assume meaningful control over on-reserve elementary and secondary educational systems.

In our first budget, we set aside \$3.7 billion to support aboriginal people and communities -- more money for aboriginal programming than in any previous federal budget.

My department has addressed the legacy of residential schools; as a result, we approved the final Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and immediately launched an advance payment program.

More recently, we took further steps to address the fundamental human rights issues facing women and children on reserves by launching consultations on matrimonial real property.

We also took steps to enable First Nations in British Columbia to assume meaningful control over on-reserve education, a model which I believe can be replicated throughout Canada.

We intend to set objectives that can be accomplished and show tangible, measurable results as quickly as possible.

Where Your Cash Goes When it Goes South

The Whitehorse Star

By: Greg Weston

Just days after Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government was accused of being stingy "mean-spirited" for cutting federal spending, the Conservatives are generously giving a truly eye-popping increase in old age security to millions of needy seniors.

A press release just out announces that as of October the basic old age pension will increase a whopping \$4.39 a month, or roughly the cost of a regular Tim's per week.

The federal largesse doesn't end there. The guaranteed income supplement paid to sustain poorest of the poor seniors is also going up by a whole \$5.38 a month, or enough to make that a large coffee. While a combined increase of 33 cents a day may not seem like much windfall for the millions of seniors living below the poverty line, government obviously has just too many other darn spending priorities.

As it happens, details of all that other spending just landed on our desk in the same pile of future recycling as the pensions press release three thick volumes of the annual public accounts showing what happened to all our tax money in the past year.

Here's a sample (and we're not making this stuff up):

- Harper's first photo op with George Bush set the treasury back almost \$300,000 for their 36 hours in Mexico, not counting the government jumbo jet, but including the costs of the PM's large communications entourage that spent most of the time hiding from the media.

The cost of that trip, however, pales compared to some of the bills left behind by Paul Martin and friends

\$1.1 million for a trip to Ireland; \$1.8 million for a trade junket to Hong Kong; \$125,000 just in cancellation charges for a planned trip to Moscow that never happened.

Taxpayers coughed up a total of \$568 million last year for "weapons and ammunition." While most of that was spent by National Defence, we would note that \$36,137 was used for artillery purchases by, ahem, the national gun registry.

While our troops in the battlefield are forever being forced to make do with less than the best equipment available, the defence department spent \$30.7 million just on new "furniture and fixtures." As usual, the Foreign Affairs budget suffered an attack of the interior decorators, siphoning \$18 million from the public purse for new drapes and such.

If the government remains a tangle of red tape and inefficiencies, it certainly isn't for a lack of the latest computers and software - in total, the feds spent just shy of \$1 billion on hi-tech gadgets last year.

Here's a fun one: The two agencies one would think least need protection apparently spent the most on it - the Mounties shelled out \$42 million and Defence \$51 million for "protection services," apparently to guard themselves.

The justice department spent over \$25 million last year hiring outside counsel, not including the considerable army of lawyers on the department's full-time payroll. **That does not include the \$16 million paid out last year to a few lucky law firms involved in settling the abuse claims from former students at Indian residential schools.**

What is it about government work that is so hazardous to eyewear? We haven't added them up, but there must be hundreds of payments to public servants - some claims are up to \$600 - for "damaged glasses." One guy over at Statistics Canada (granted, a hotbed of eye-glazing work) even managed to get \$236 as "compensation for new contact lenses."

Over at the Library and Archives of Canada, one employee was reimbursed for a \$141 "parking ticket while travelling for work."

In the office of the ethics commissioner, someone with slightly less than perfect ethical conduct made off with an employee's \$610 digital camera, subsequently replaced at public expense.

Taxpayers were stiffed a hefty \$3,661 for "compensation for damage to a carwash by a (Natural Resources) departmental vehicle."

- And finally, the Canada Revenue Agency reports it paid an employee \$362 for an airline ticket after she cut her vacation short to - wait for it - attend an office retreat. All of which helps to explain why our poorest seniors are getting a pension increase of 33 cents a day.

Former PM Martin Bases Tory Aboriginal Policy

Times Colonist (also in CanWest News Service)

OTTAWA - Former Prime Minister Paul Martin made a rare appearance yesterday to level a sharp criticism of the Conservative government's treatment of aboriginals.

The former Liberal leader -- now a backbench MP who is rarely present in the House of Commons -- took part in a high-level panel to examine the government's refusal to sign a United Nations document recognizing the fundamental rights of aboriginals around the world.

Only Russia and Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Tories -- who claim the declaration could conflict with domestic laws -- refused to sign on.