

**The Honourable Jim Prentice, PC, MP
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and
Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians**

To the Annual General Meeting of:

Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada

Fairmont Hotel
Winnipeg, Manitoba

February 22, 2006

Good morning. It is a privilege to be invited to speak at this annual general meeting and since I am unable to attend in person, I appreciate the opportunity to send this message.

Même si je ne suis ministre des Affaires indiennes et du Nord canadien que depuis quelques semaines, je m'intéresse activement aux affaires indiennes depuis plusieurs années. C'est pourquoi je reconnais depuis longtemps l'importance du rôle de votre organisation.

Last year I was very supportive of the First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act – it is an important part of self-government and the way forward.

I recall specifically discussions with Harold Calla at that time, for whom I have a lot of respect.

Because you help Aboriginal communities realize their full potential or, to paraphrase the theme of this year's national conference: "build capacity for future generations", enabling them to govern effectively and manage resources wisely. And with an organization now 800 members strong and growing, your role in encouraging effective, responsible fiscal management in your communities is becoming ever more significant.

In six short years, the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association has amassed an impressive list of accomplishments of which you should be justly proud.

Your work in training financial managers and establishing valuable partnerships with private companies and public agencies across Canada, serves to enrich the professional capacity of your members and ultimately, benefits your communities.

Il s'agit de réalisations remarquables et j'aimerais féliciter les membres du secrétariat et du conseil d'administration de l'Association pour leurs efforts. Votre travail a des répercussions positives pour tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes, autochtones et non autochtones.

I believe that Aboriginal people have much to contribute to Canada socially, culturally and economically. And I also recognize the relationship between accountability in Aboriginal communities and economic opportunity. My work on the Indian Claims Commission and on the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has given me a deep understanding of these important issues.

Canada's prosperity relies on strong, sustainable communities. And to remain strong, a community must have accountable leaders, transparent decision-making processes, and effective management practices.

Your Association enables First Nations to acquire the financial knowledge and managerial expertise they need to thrive. Thanks to your organization, more and more Aboriginal communities are in a position to realize their full potential – and all Canadians stand to benefit.

I look forward to meeting with you in the future and to reading the full report on the conference and general meeting. I wish you an interesting and successful conference. Keep up the good work.

Thank you