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Maurice Vellacott, MP
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Conservative Government apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools

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OTTAWA – Maurice Vellacott, MP for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin, applauds the Speech from the Throne’s reference to an apology by the Prime Minister, on behalf of his Government, to former students of Indian Residential Schools. Vellacott has a First Nations cousin, a First Nations nephew and niece, and a number of First Nations friends.

Vellacott said, “Our Conservative Party has made a serious effort to do right by aboriginal people and I will continue to exert my influence to that end. I commend Minister Prentice for having done the right thing in bringing a speedy resolution to the Indian residential school claims. As a father of 4 children and soon to be 6 grandchildren, I think it a terrible blot on our Canadian history to rip precious children out of the arms of their parents to forcibly have them in schools of the government’s choosing. To those who argue, that it was intended to benefit the Indian children, I say, ‘That is not for the government to decide those matters.’ As a present day Conservative and classical liberal, upholding parental autonomy is a core principal for me. My heart grieves when I think of the conversations I’ve had with precious First Nations people who recount to me the tragedy and the dysfunction created by losing out on those vital formative years with their own family. They could never gain that back. They’ve told me they were driven to alcoholic or other addictions to mask the yearning void in their lives, and without proper parenting role models, they perpetuated the cycle. My First Nations nephew and niece were born with fetal alcohol syndrome and it impairs their lives to this day. To be frank, I know that a base payment of \$10,000 per certified attendee plus \$3,000 per year in attendance, will never replace those lost years and lost generations, but it is a sincere statement of regret, of repentance, in respect to that sad chapter for which we will continue to pay the social costs in the years ahead. To paraphrase the words of a wise book, “The impact of the sins of one generation are passed on sometimes as far as the third and fourth generations.” To make amends and apologize in respect to the Indian residential schools is the right thing to do morally, legally and economically, as protracting it would cost far more from a fiscal point of view. I have pressed this case with my caucus peers.”

The MP for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin, emphasized, “This Conservative Government is committed to achieving a just resolution to the sad legacy of the Indian Residential School system – a resolution that will ensure former students and Canadians can move together toward healing and reconciliation.”

Vellacott stressed that, “This Government acknowledges that the Indian Residential School system had a negative impact on the students of those schools, their families and communities.” Vellacott has learned that, “There have been serious negative repercussions right down to the present among First Nations people on and off reserve.”

Vellacott explained, “The Prime Minister, on behalf of our Government, will mark the launch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with a statement of apology to close this sad chapter in Canada’s history. Minister Strahl will set up a Tribunal under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as quickly as possible.”

Vellacott concluded, “Rightly, this past spring our Conservative Government supported a motion for an apology in the House of Commons. Now is the appropriate time to move ahead on it.”

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