



LUBICON LEGAL DEFENCE FUND

September 2004

Dear Friend,

I need you to help me expose—with your messages to government officials and your generous contribution—the cruelty and suffering that Prime Minister Paul Martin, his Ministers, and his self-serving federal bureaucrats are inflicting on the Lubicon people.

We've all heard Paul Martin's brave new words about helping aboriginals and the Lubicon. We now know the truth is the cowardly old ways.

Paul Martin has betrayed you, me, and the Lubicon people. You and I waited patiently and respectfully for almost a year for Prime Minister Martin to honour his claim that he is "committed to a just settlement of [the Lubicon] land claim."

The patience is gone. The respect is over. It's now obvious that Prime Minister Martin, as cruel as Prime Minister Chrétien, is as unwilling or as unable as his predecessor to honour his commitments.

Once again, you and I must help the Lubicon, some of the most disadvantaged and oppressed people in Canada. Once again, we must make their plight and a Prime Minister's and a government's bad faith and cruelty towards them a matter of public and press scrutiny.

We learned from our *Please, Keep Your Promise campaign*—and the Lubicon negotiators confirmed—that the government will negotiate with the Lubicon only when they are caught in the stark light of relentless, truth-exposing publicity.

Please, help me turn that stark light back on.

After ten months of Martin government, I now neither trust nor believe anything Paul Martin says about the Lubicon.

My trust in Martin was extinguished because of his actions and lack of action, because of the evidence we gathered from the Access to Information investigations that your donations made possible, and because his previous Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Andy Mitchell, lied to the House of Commons about the Lubicon negotiations.

As you and I go forward to help the Lubicon, my working assumption is—until proven otherwise—that the Paul Martin government, including Andy Scott, the latest Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, plans the same cruel policy of deceit, duplicity, and bad faith towards the Lubicon people that Jean Chrétien's government inflicted since 1993.

To assume anything less would betray our commitment to help the Lubicon people.

The strategies that I'll be sharing with you in this letter and asking you to support with *your* steadfast commitment—a commitment that the Lubicon have always been able to trust—are based on the fact that we can rely only on what Prime Minister Paul Martin actually does. We can never trust his word, never his commitments, and never his promises.

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Before I give you more details about what Paul Martin and his government have and have not done, and how—with your support—we'll proceed, I'd like to share with you something that happened in Little Buffalo, Alberta a few weeks ago.

In August, I wrote to Chief Bernard Ominayak to ask how we might continue to help him and his people, given that Prime Minister Chrétien broke his promise to them and that there was a new government in Ottawa. I wrote in part . . .

Dear Chief Ominayak,

Like you, the supporters of the Lubicon Legal Defence Fund were deeply disappointed that their "Please, Keep Your Promise" campaign—despite the best efforts of Bruce Cockburn and many organizations—did not result in Prime Minister Chrétien honouring the 1993 land agreement promise he made to you and your people.

Nevertheless, based on the telephone calls and letters we've received, it is clear that our supporters are as determined as ever to do all they can to help you achieve the just settlement, self-government, and fair compensation that has eluded your people for so many years.

With another new government and another new Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in Ottawa, it is appropriate that we consider, once again, how the supporters of the Lubicon Legal Defence Fund might help you. However, we need your help and guidance in order to decide how best to proceed.

I wanted Chief Ominayak's help and guidance because his negotiations with the federal government are sensitive and complex, and because the government has been acting in bad faith. Also, it is one thing to respectfully *ask* a Prime Minister to keep a promise, it's quite another to raise national—and even international—public outrage and media scrutiny to compel a duplicitous government to honour its commitments.

In my letter I suggested a number of possible campaigns, and asked the Chief to consider them. Chief Ominayak and the Lubicon Band Council gave thoughtful and lengthy consideration to our ideas, and then asked Kevin Thomas, one of their senior advisors, to meet with me and give me their views.

The first message that Mr. Thomas was instructed to pass on to you and me was the deep appreciation that the Chief and Council have for the work that the supporters of the Lubicon Legal Defence Fund are doing on their behalf.

They wanted us to know that the unrelenting public pressure that you and I bring down on the government and the politicians is crucial to their negotiations.

The Lubicon, Mr. Thomas told me, are asking us—need us—to do all we can to help them, and to pressure the government to negotiate with them in good faith and in a timely manner.

Helping the Lubicon will not be easy. Paul Martin and his government have proven to be no friends of the Lubicon people. If you decide today to continue your support of the Lubicon, which I fervently hope, this is what you and I will be fighting.

Paul Martin says he is “committed to a just settlement of [the Lubicon] land claim.” Committed? Then why is it that since he became Prime Minister there have been no talks between his government and the Lubicon?

Committed? Then why is it that his first Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Hon. Andy Mitchell, misled the House of Commons on April 27, 2004? During Question Period, he said, “we intend to re-engage the Lubicon after its band election next month.” There was no re-engagement.

Committed? Then why is it that the federal government—in order to subvert the Lubicon’s capacity to negotiate effectively—has been cutting off loans to the Lubicon (required to be repaid when a settlement is reached) for research and legal support?

Today—because of Paul Martin—the Lubicon people are suffering more, are in greater danger of annihilation as a people, and have less hope for the future than when Martin became Prime Minister on December 12, 2003.

Paul Martin because of either his weakness, incompetence, procrastination, neglect, or deliberate machinations has done more harm to the Lubicon people in the last year than Jean Chrétien did in the previous ten.

To help the Lubicon people, please help me publicly expose Paul Martin’s weakness and hypocrisy.

Canadian voters have given us a unique political opportunity that we can use to help the Lubicon. As you know, Prime Minister Martin and the Liberal Party are in a minority government. The Prime Minister’s treatment of the Lubicon shows that his word, his promises, and his commitments are meaningless.

Prime Minister Martin cannot be trusted; his contempt for the Lubicon’s suffering is proof. This is not a record any politician wants exposed in an election campaign.

With your generous financial help, we can use this fact to make concluding a just agreement with the Lubicon people before the next election a political priority—perhaps even a necessity—for Prime Minister Martin and the Liberal Party.

Please, join me in showing Canadian voters how Paul Martin and the Liberal Party are treating the Lubicon people. To help the Lubicon, let’s show Canadian voters the true value of a Paul Martin commitment.

Please, today, make as generous a contribution as you can to the Lubicon Legal Defence Fund. I will use your contribution to help the Lubicon negotiate the just settlement that has been denied them for over fifty years—the settlement they need to have any hope for a future.

I can use your gift to make television, radio, and newspaper advertisements that explain the Lubicon’s plight and Paul Martin’s and the government’s cruel policy of deceit, duplicity, and bad faith.

I can use your contribution and support to persuade influential groups and individuals committed to social justice—Amnesty International (Canada), Assembly of First Nations, Canadian Auto Workers, Canadian Labour Congress, Council of Canadians, David Suzuki, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives and others—to reaffirm their support for the Lubicon, and pressure the Prime Minister.

I can use your generosity to bring together Canadian human rights lawyers to publicly condemn the government for its treatment of the Lubicon, and to show that the plight of the Lubicon is not just one impoverished people's struggle against injustice, but rather a much broader human rights issue that affects all aboriginal peoples and that shames Canada.

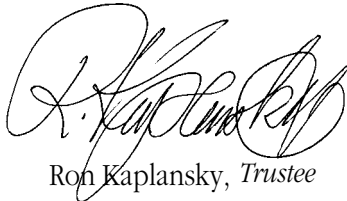
I can use your charity and your compassion to continue supporting and promoting the efforts of Pat Martin, the NDP Member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre. In the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources, Mr. Martin has been investigating and exposing the Lubicon issue in order to build multi-party support in the House of Commons for the Lubicon cause.

Please, make a generous contribution to reaffirm your commitment to the Lubicon people.

Help me use this unique window of political opportunity between now and the next election to make the Lubicon's struggle and their promised land agreement a political priority for Prime Minister Martin and the Liberal Party.

The Lubicon need and rely upon our support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Kaplansky', written in a cursive style.

Ron Kaplansky, *Trustee*

P.S. Please send a message to the Hon. Andy Scott—Paul Martin's latest Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Tell Mr. Scott that you no longer trust the Prime Minister, that you are reaffirming your support of the Lubicon people, and that you expect a settlement before the next election. You can use either the post card I've included with this letter or the contact information on your donation form. Thank you.