

**Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly
All Candidates Forum – July 15, 2003**

Question: I would like to know the position of each of the candidates in regard to C-6 and C-19...

National Chief Matthew Coon Come: Bill C-19 itself. I believe in a legislative approach. My history has shown that I have taken the initiative to replace the Indian Act. I was one of the principal negotiators using the legislative approach so that the Indian Act does not apply to us. The resolution that was adopted was one in which there was an outright rejection but there was a small clause there that talked about diversity, respecting our diversity, and I for one, stood in Ottawa trying to persuade the people of my position on Bill C-19. I believe that we have to ensure there is non-derogation clause even though I know there is a debate on Parliament right now. I believe there should be an opting out clause. I believe that each First Nation should determine that legislation, if they think it's in their best interest, that it be so. So that we are not First Nations imposing on their views on others but being mindful and being respectful but that this Assembly rejected the Bill C-19. This Assembly also did say that Bill C-19 can be adapted if it was to the region. That's what this Assembly adopted. But I tend to believe that each First Nation should determine what approach they want to take, what legislation that they want, and if I may suggest, and I made this suggestion on Bill C-19, just like we did on Land Management Act, we should not prevent other First Nations from advancing. If this legislation is by itself, then add a list to it. If you are for it, then put your name to it. If you do not want to be a part of it, don't. That's an opt-in, opt-out clause.

Chief Roberta Jamieson: I respect the First Nations throughout Canada who want access to the kind of institutions that are outlined in C-19. But I understand and agree with those who have said national legislation is not the way to go to empower institutions. Because many of our First Nations believe national legislation of any kind of that nature violates their rights. So, I will stand with those who want access to the institutions for their region but as not as national legislation.

Mr. Phil Fontaine: Bill C-19. I believe strongly in institutional development by First Nations. I believe strongly that our institutions, those institutions that we create have to be controlled and managed and by First Nations, including having the ability to tax external interests – external interests - because for too long we have had other governments act as our tax collectors and, of course, the benefits don't go to our communities. They go elsewhere.