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Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell

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•(1110)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.)): Good morning. I'd like to call this committee to order for meeting number 40, on Thursday, June 9.

We're very honoured today to be able to do the study on the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement and the Labrador Inuit Tax Treatment Agreement. I'm certainly very honoured to be chairing this meeting when we have these witnesses before us. As I've mentioned to the committee numerous times, this is the last land claims agreement for the Inuit of Canada, and I'm certainly very honoured to be able to chair this committee meeting on this occasion, as I think it's a moment in history for Canada that all Inuit will be able to have their land claims completed in Canada.

I also feel that I have to give my apologies for not having the bill before us, but we will certainly entertain to hear from the president of the Labrador Inuit Association. He has with him Toby Andersen, the chief land claims negotiator, and Veryan Haysom, legal adviser. You're our only witnesses this morning. We hope to have other witnesses before us on Tuesday on the bill, and we certainly hope to get the bill before this committee as soon as possible.

What we do is we'll hear your presentation, and then we'll have time for the different parties around the table to be able to ask you questions. You can call upon your fellow witnesses to help you with the questions.

Again, welcome to our committee, and I certainly want to say welcome to the delegation that you have with you to lend support to your presentation this morning.

The floor is yours, Mr. Andersen.

Mr. William Andersen III (President, Labrador Inuit Association): Good morning, Madam Chairman.

It is a real pleasure for me to be here with you today. It is an honour for me to speak to such a distinguished group of people and to share with you my thoughts on this very important review of Bill C-56. So let me begin.

My name is William Andersen III. I am the president of the Labrador Inuit Association, which represents approximately 5,300 Inuit in Labrador. I've been involved with our land claim process from the very beginning, from *Our Footprints are Everywhere*, which was our land use and occupancy study, conducted at the beginning of the process in 1975. I'm also someone whose life was changed by factors I could not control at an early age. In 1956, when

I was eight, my family was relocated from our home in Nutuk without our consent. So I've seen a lot of change and I understand why this bill is so important to our people.

The Inuit of Labrador ratified the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement over a year ago. On May 26, 2004, 86% of our people came out to vote, and 76.4% of eligible voters voted yes for our agreement. They did this because they too have seen a lot of change and they understand how important it is for us to take charge of our own future. The Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly passed and received royal assent to the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act in a single day, December 6, 2004.

The Inuit of Labrador continue to live a traditional lifestyle. We camp, live on the land, hunt and gather food, and most importantly, maintain an active connection with our Inuit heritage and language. At the same time, we're building on our traditions to create economic development and social programs for the future. The approval of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement will address concerns that are vital to us now and in the long term. It will provide clarity on matters of land ownership, rights to resources, compensation for damages, and local and regional government.

All of these matters have been successfully concluded in the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement. Once ratification takes place we will be in a better position to improve the living conditions of the Labrador Inuit by creating and providing employment and economic opportunities. We will continue to focus on traditional skills and on training and skills transfer for emerging opportunities that will result from the implementation of our land claims agreement. We will be in a better position to respond to resource development opportunities that are happening right now.

We will create a new government called the Nunatsiavut government. Nunatsiavut is the Labrador Inuit name for our homeland. In English it means "our beautiful land". Our Nunatsiavut government will protect and increase our ability to provide services to our people. We have already made a great deal of progress. We're proud of the education and health programs we have developed and are delivering to Labrador Inuit.

But we continue to face critical funding deficits and increasing demands for services that meet Canadian standards. We want to move ahead now with providing adequate housing in Nain, in Hopedale, and other Nunatsiavut communities. The national housing program has provided increased housing for aboriginal people, but not for Labrador Inuit. Education is a major concern. We want to provide a level of education that will meet the academic, cultural, and language needs of Labrador Inuit. We have a large youth population, and their education is critical to our future.

• (1115)

For all of these reasons, we have been working hard to get a federal draft bill introduced and approved by the House as well as the Senate. The Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement is important to all of us here today. It will close the circle of land claims for the Inuit of Canada. It will be the first aboriginal land claim finalized in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in Atlantic Canada.

This agreement is good for Canada. The third and final step in the process now lies with you. The approval of Bill C-56 is in your hands. Our people have invested us with the responsibility to explain to you how very important it is to approve this bill so that we can move and implement what we have been working on for the past 30 years.

Our people back home are counting on us to be the link between them and the federal government. They feel we have done our part. Through long years of negotiations, we have succeeded. We have our agreement. The agreement will provide our people with a foundation on which to build new relationships within Canadian society. In the future, as we work to implement our agreement, we will work to build stronger relationships with aboriginal Canadians and all Canadians.

Canadians will be in a better position to understand and appreciate our journey within Canada. We're infused with hope and optimism as we successfully move the system forward. We're ready to find effective solutions that combine traditional values with new skills developed in health, social services, economic development, and politics. We are ready to create opportunities that draw on traditional values combined with formal education, training, and technology. The challenge is to build a north where hunting, fishing, and trapping remain a viable and respected lifestyle for those who choose to pursue these activities, but that at the same time produces doctors, lawyers, and teachers.

We are ready to work directly with the provincial and federal governments in developing new partnership arrangements, and with other northern governments and northern indigenous peoples; partnerships based on an emerging recognition of the benefits of working together to find solutions to common problems, be they environmental, economic, social, or political. The outcome will be greater knowledge of the world and its peoples and an ability to share within our own communities.

I strongly believe the future rests with young people, with the children and youth of today. We have to find new ways of building capacity through existing or new institutions: the capacity to live peacefully together, the capacity to avoid or reduce conflict, and the capacity to build a future based on a vision of communities that are healthy and sustainable.

We believe the future is brighter for us now. We have worked for it. We must hold together as Inuit and maintain our values and continue to promote and share those values as we go forth. We want and need the support of our fellow Canadians to do so.

Nakummiik. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Andersen.

We'll go through our line of questioning. We'll start with the Conservative Party.

Mr. Prentice.

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Andersen and Toby Andersen, Mr. Haysom, welcome here today. You've come a long way from Nain to be with us, and we very much appreciate it.

I'd like to start by congratulating you on your journey here. I know you've been negotiating this claim for nigh on 25 years. It has taken a long time for you to get here. You've been very patient, and I think congratulations are in order. It would seem as though your land claims agreement, this comprehensive claim, will be addressed reasonably expeditiously here by the House of Commons and the Senate. It's a long journey, and I congratulate you on all the steps you've taken.

I'd also like, on behalf of my colleagues Mr. Harrison and Ms. Skelton, to express our appreciation for all of the work you have done and your lawyers have done in addressing our questions prior to today. We've had the opportunity to meet four or five times and have put a lot of specific requests in front of you and your legal counsel. Those requests have been answered and satisfied in a great amount of detail, and that has aided us in coming to grips with the claim. So thank you very much.

• (1120)

The Chair: Could I interrupt you for a second? I've just been notified that Mr. Toby Andersen had something to add to the president's report, so before we go any further—

Mr. Jim Prentice: I have no problem whatsoever in deferring to Mr. Andersen.

The Chair: Okay.

I apologize to Mr. Toby Anderson. I didn't realize you had a separate presentation. We'll listen to your presentation and then we'll do the line of questioning from everyone after that.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Toby Andersen (Chief Land Claims Negotiator, Labrador Inuit Association): Thank you.

Good morning, Madam Chair and committee members. I thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

As chief negotiator for the Labrador Inuit land claims, I want to share my perspective on what the process and our land claim mean.

This agreement has come out of a tough negotiation process. The Labrador Inuit have been patiently waiting for over 30 years for this agreement. They were patient because they understood the importance. Their message to us was to get it right.

This land claim is about redressing the past and creating a future. Labrador Inuit have suffered socially and economically from the effects of relocation, which resulted in the near loss of our language, culture, and traditions. To compound problems, Labrador Inuit have not been able to access some federal programs that benefit other aboriginal peoples.

This land claim agreement will allow the Labrador Inuit to regain control over our language and culture, over our own affairs and governance. It will restore our dignity and pride as Inuit and will allow self-reliance and self-determination as Inuit within our own homeland, Nunatsiavut.

This agreement is good for Inuit, for the province, and for Canada. It is the vision of our forefathers, who passed the negotiation torch to us. It is the vision of our youth and the future of our youth. It is the future of the last Inuit society in Canada to negotiate a land claim.

On a national level, this agreement is good for Canada. I want to highlight two components of our agreement that I believe are good for Canada. First, it creates a national park within Nunatsiavut. This is the Inuit contribution to the people of Canada: having a national park as part of our settlement area is a central part of this agreement. This agreement is the first in Canada that includes an implementation fund, which brings closure to the financial implementation component of the agreement. This sets a very significant precedent for implementation of land claim agreements in Canada.

The Labrador Inuit have ratified this agreement by an overwhelming majority. The province has ratified it and given it royal assent. This agreement and the future of the Labrador Inuit now rest with you and with Parliament. We ask that you help bring closure to a long process. It is time for all of us together to move forward.

Nakummiik. Thank you.

● (1125)

The Chair: Thank you very much. I apologize again for not allowing you to speak earlier.

Now we'll get back to Mr. Prentice. We won't penalize you for your time.

Mr. Jim Prentice: Thank you, Mr. Andersen. I think you've also added some time to my speaking time, which is good.

I also would like to say to you and to everyone else who is here how very proud I was as a Canadian to travel up to Nain and to Hopedale and visit with your community and talk about the claim and have some of our meetings.

Your ancestral lands are one of the most beautiful areas in this country. It's just a remarkable part of Canada. I think we'd be richer as a nation if more Canadians had the opportunity to travel there and to see.

I had the good fortune to travel there in a cargo plane. I think there's a perception that members of Parliament usually fly first class. On that particular venture I was in the back of a cargo plane,

behind the cargo boxes, flying into Nain, because that was the only way I could get in on that particular day.

But I was treated very warmly while I was there, and I am so impressed with the work you are doing: the economic development activity, the fish plant you have in Nain, the stone-quarrying plant outside of Nain, and the processing plant south, as I recall, in Hopedale.

This is something I don't think most Canadian know about, that in fact through your hard work and industry you are actually processing a form of granite there that is sought worldwide and is shipped in enormous quantities to Italy, where it's sold and processed throughout Europe. It's a unique Canadian product that people all over the world are looking for, and it comes right from Nain.

So I very much admire the industry and the hard work your people have shown, and that, of course, is reflected in the claim you've negotiated.

There are some questions I'd like to turn to in the agreement. Again I would say at the outset I'm very impressed with the spirit of compromise that obviously underlies the agreement, both in terms of how the Inuit have approached it, how Newfoundland has approached it, and how Canada has approached it as well. There is much in this agreement that reflects the best interests of Canada for everyone, in particular the Inuit. And as you've said, it's a way to move forward.

One aspect of the agreement I would like to query is the overlap in respect of a portion of Quebec. As I understand it, there is a slim wedge in northeastern Quebec that the Inuit claim as part of their ancestral lands, which comprise part of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement of 1975. I wonder if you could explain to me how that has been addressed in the agreement. Is there an overlap understanding that's in place? I gather there is something with the Makivik Corporation of the Quebec Inuit. Has the Quebec government been involved in those discussions? Could you please tell me where that stands?

Mr. William Andersen III: We have finalized now two overlap agreements. One is with the Inuit of Quebec through Makivik Corporation. The overlap area you look at—the narrow piece of land—is an area the Labrador Inuit have subsistence harvesting rights to. It's not something we were looking for in terms of lands ownership or anything, except to exercise our traditional activities, such as hunting, fishing, and gathering. So there is that.

We have finalized the agreement now. It's being put into final wording. The president of Makivik, Pita Aatami, and I shook hands on the deal last fall and initialed the agreement.

Also, we have an overlap with the Innu of Labrador. Those negotiations came to a conclusion nearly two weeks ago, and now we're working on setting a time for formal signing of the overlap and how we're going to treat each other on each other's lands. All that has been worked out.

● (1130)

Mr. Jim Prentice: Thank you.

In terms of the second agreement, my sense from the agreement and from visiting with you is that there seems to be a very strong working relationship between Inuit and the Government of Newfoundland in particular, and perhaps Fisheries Canada as well, in respect of some of the offshore resources.

How do you anticipate that unfolding over time? Because some of the rights that you have secured in the agreement relate to future opportunities, to the issuance of future licences, to in a sense a first right of refusal to acquire certain new rights that might be issued. How do you see that unfolding both in terms of offshore fishing resources and also the harvesting and guiding activities north into the Torngat in particular?

Mr. William Andersen III: With respect to resources in the offshore, we have negotiated the rights to a percentage of any new quotas in the future that may be handed down by the Government of Canada. However, it's been a difficult and long road in terms of trying to get involved in the offshore industry, primarily because I don't believe there are going to be any more new licences ever issued by the Government of Canada. The only way to get into the fishery is to buy it out, so what we have started doing through our development corporation is we have bought fishing licences, and now are becoming more actively involved inshore and also on the offshore.

With respect to resource management on the inshore, the bays, the rivers, we do have in our agreement co-management agreements that will help us to manage the resources and as well do the research required in order that we can do the right kind of allocation of resources so we don't deplete them. Through our agreement, it has to be clearly understood that subsistence harvesting rights in our Inuit lands will always take precedence over commercial rights. There is that in our agreement. We have to ensure that the needs of our people are met, put food on their table before we start going into commercial development.

Do you have anything to add?

Toby would like to add something to that.

Mr. Toby Andersen: Thank you.

I could perhaps help to bring some clarity. First of all, what I should say is that with respect to the offshore and the inshore, our agreement does not affect the rights of any existing licence holders for the settlement area and the zone. It allows Labrador Inuit to be able to be issued a percentage of any new licences that may be issued after the effective date. In issuing those new licences, and determining the percentage of licences to be issued, the percentage was negotiated, and it's based on the existing Inuit fishing effort. In most cases, you will see in the agreement it's 20% of any new licences, with the exception of shrimp, where it's 11%. That's based on the existing Inuit fishing effort. I wanted to make that clarification.

• (1135)

The Chair: You're out of time, but I'm sure we're going to be able to do more than one round.

Just for the clarification of the people in the room, we allow nine minutes for the first questioner and then we do seven minutes. Then

when we get to the second round it's a five-minute one between the opposition and government side.

Mr. Andersen.

Mr. William Andersen III: Madam Chair, part of the question Mr. Prentice asked earlier with respect to Quebec negotiations wasn't completely answered. I would like our legal counsel to give you a better answer on that one.

The Chair: We'll take a very short amount of time to make sure that's clarified before we go to the next question.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Veryan Haysom (Legal Counsel & Negotiator, Labrador Inuit Association): Thank you, Madam Chair.

The history of that particular strip shown in schedule 2-A is a long one. To cut to the chase on it, the history starts with Bill C-9 to approve the James Bay agreement. The Labrador Inuit Association appeared in front of this standing committee back in 1976 to object to section 3 of Bill C-9, which sought to extinguish the rights of all Inuit in and to the territory. LIA has never accepted that extinguishment. Despite its appearance in front of the committee, it continued.

Subsequently, in 1983 LIA approached the National Assembly in Quebec. The late premier René Lévesque was head of the government at the time. The LIA requested negotiations to settle the rights the Labrador Inuit claim in that area. The National Assembly agreed; the negotiations were carried out under a section of the James Bay agreement—section 2.14, I believe, if my memory is correct. Those negotiations continued for a number of years. They involved all the parties to the James Bay agreement, including the Cree, the Naskapis—who by then were parties—and the federal and provincial governments, the provincial government being the Quebec government.

Those negotiations continued for about two years. They resulted in a tentative agreement that could not be completed because the overlap between Makivik and LIA had not been resolved. With the agreement that President Andersen referred to earlier in his answer to you, Mr. Prentice, that particular obstacle is now out of the way. The negotiations for the Quebec portion of that area—not the offshore portion—can now be addressed with hope that all parties will be participating.

The Chair: Thank you for the clarification.

We'll now go on to Mr. Cleary.

[translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary (Louis-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Andersen, I am very pleased to see you, especially on this occasion. The first time we met, it was to discuss the progress of the negotiations and I told you at the time that our Party would be extremely pleased to give you all the help you might need to succeed. Of course, you did not need me to negotiate. You carried out an excellent negotiation with the excellent results that we see today.

I want to congratulate you for the agreement that you have achieved, and to tell you that it leaves me with a bit of nostalgia. On this day 25 years ago, I was working for the Conseil des Atikamekw et des Montagnais and we were starting to negotiate a comprehensive land claim. I have to admit that we have not succeeded yet. After 30 years of negotiations, the discussions continue and there is still no result. So, I must say that I am a bit jealous to see that you have been able to conclude an agreement, but I want to add that you deserve our congratulations.

I am proud of your achievements especially since I was not very often able to achieve successfully the negotiations I led. However, I have been pleased here in Parliament to be able to deal with various bills relating to such agreements. Each time, I am happy to involve myself fully on behalf of our native peoples. You can be sure that the Bloc québécois will always support you and help you achieve what you want as quickly as possible and to complete the work as you deserve that it be completed.

I will not go into the details of the agreement because I believe that you did excellent work. Still, I want to underline a few points that are especially interesting to me.

The issue of overlapping responsibilities is extremely important in any negotiation. You were referring a while ago to the Cree agreement and that is when I got involved in these issues. I went to Parliament with the elders of our communities because there were overlapping territories. We had not been able to find a solution. It is extremely rare to find a successful result on overlapping responsibilities. That is why I am extremely pleased that you have been able to achieve that result. That is another positive aspect of the work that you have done, which will be helpful to the other aboriginal groups that will have to negotiate their own agreements in the future.

As far as I am concerned, one of the major issues that you should deal with relates to resources. The future of our native peoples depends upon the development of resources because that is how they will get the funds required to fund their governments. It will not be done through the traditional system of funding that is too often imposed by the Department. I think specifically of Nunavut which is facing financial problems linked, among other things, to their non-participation or their very low participation to resource projects.

I urge you to continue your work on this issue because it is key to the success of your economic development. It is extremely important. I have not read the parts of the agreement dealing with resources. Can you tell me what you have achieved about that?

• (1140)

Mr. Toby Andersen: I think the chapter on economic development is very clear. It was a long negotiation. It allows Labrador Inuit to be able to derive 25% of any subsurface provincial resource revenue from a development on Inuit-owned land.

One of the most significant aspects of the economic development chapter, I think, comes from our experience with the Voisey's Bay development, and that is the negotiation of an impact benefit agreement prior to the development proceeding. That's been a very positive aspect of the Voisey's Bay development, from the Inuit perspective. All our communities within our settlement area, Nunatsiavut, are already benefiting from that impact benefit agreement. Revenues are shared with each of the communities.

We've used that economic development chapter and also have a very clear process for the consent to development and for developers, by way of work plans being established and all of the necessary environmental and other avenues that need to be incorporated into the overall consent for development. We spent a lot of time on it, and I think we've gone further than other agreements in that respect.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you very much. Because the time includes the answer with the question, I'll have to move on to the next questioner, but I assure you that we have time for another round.

I now go to Mr. Martin with the NDP.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome, guests.

Let me just say at the outset, on behalf of the NDP caucus, we too welcome this opportunity to work with you in the hopefully speedy passage of this enabling legislation that will recognize the historic agreement you've achieved. You can count on full and enthusiastic support from the NDP.

I have some technical questions I hope you won't be offended by and will take in the spirit they're intended. The first question I have is this. If there are to be benefits flowing from this agreement to members of your community, the question arises about who is a member of your community and by what criteria you determine who will be eligible for benefits. In other words, citizenship becomes an issue with any nation or any form of self-government. We need to know exactly who is covered by this agreement.

Is there an identifiable list of criteria for who will be eligible for any types of benefits that may flow in the sharing of resources or benefits from this agreement?

Mr. William Andersen III: If you go to part 3.3 of our land claim agreement, eligibility criteria are clearly set out in there concerning who are going to be eligible beneficiaries to the agreement. Beyond that, Mr. Martin, through negotiations when we create Nunatsiavut government, we have made provision in there for non-aboriginal people to be able to participate to a degree in the community government to ensure that their interests are represented.

Also, one of the things we're proud about in this agreement is that Nunatsiavut government, like anyone else, is subject to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, so that all citizens can be protected.

Mr. Pat Martin: Yes, I noticed that throughout the reading; it's well emphasized in many places in the document that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms shall and will apply, of course.

I raise these almost as devil's advocate issues, because I know that people who are critical of the resolution of self-governance negotiations often raise issues such as how will non-Inuit living in Inuit communities be treated, or even how will non-Inuit residents of Labrador be affected, for instance, in the issue of access to the lands under the agreement. What sorts of access rights will private landholders have to cross lands now covered by this agreement? Will there be the absolute right to private property rights, if you will, to bar people who may have some historical connection to those lands from visiting those lands? Do you anticipate any of that difficulty?

• (1150)

Mr. William Andersen III: I suppose the best example I can use is there are other Canadians, and in several instances Americans, who have historically operated sport fishing camps in Nunatsiavut. Those permits are grandfathered in. We don't envisage removing them, unless they choose to remove themselves. However, when it becomes the Nunatsiavut government, instead of going to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for permits, they will be coming to the Nunatsiavut government. And we don't see us removing non-Inuit or non-Canadians from the area.

I can see us perhaps creating regulations that are of greater benefit to the Inuit of Labrador through their operation than there have been in the past.

Mr. Pat Martin: That's the information I was interested in. And further from that, for the people who may be watching and who aren't aware, what other specific areas of jurisdiction will you have governance over? You've mentioned the issuing of permits for that type of lease. Health and welfare, education—what is the list of areas of jurisdiction that you will have control over once your governance takes place?

Mr. William Andersen III: Once Nunatsiavut kicks in, we've negotiated four or five programs and services with fiscal financing arrangements coming along with it, but our long-term objective is to take over all programs and services in the area, either from the federal government or from the provincial government.

Mr. Pat Martin: Including health and social services, etc.?

Mr. William Andersen III: Yes, but not including criminal law. Criminal law will still fall under Canada. However, we will have our own court and justice system, which hopefully will be a complement to the provincial and federal justice systems, rather than competing with them.

Mr. Pat Martin: That's very exciting. It's all very exciting.

Yes, sir.

Mr. Toby Andersen: I would like to add a couple of points. I want to make clear that with respect to non-aboriginal residents in Inuit communities, we have a provision in our agreement, and we are in the process of negotiating our first agreement arrangement with the province for Nunatsiavut to be able to deliver programs and services to non-aboriginal as well as Inuit within communities.

I want to make clear that the Nunatsiavut jurisdiction is over Inuit and it's confined to the area of Inuit-owned lands.

Thirdly, and in addition to what William said, for any existing non-aboriginal interest in terms of private land, cottages, cabins, there's provision in the agreement that those will be grandfathered.

And not only will those be grandfathered, but if the person who owns the cottage or cabin and has a bit of a history of harvesting for subsistence purposes in that area will demonstrate to the Nunatsiavut government the area where they have harvested, they will be issued a permit to harvest wildlife. So you don't find that component in other land claim agreements.

Mr. Pat Martin: No, you don't. That's actually very generous and should satisfy anybody who may have some reason to criticize or have that apprehension.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Martin.

We now go to the government side.

Mr. Valley is next.

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for attending today. You had a long trip to get down here. By your history and your very nature, you've been a very determined people, and it shows up with your long negotiations. It's good to get to this day on which we can discuss it at this committee and move this issue forward in the House.

One of the things that impressed me very much is the number of people you managed to turn out for the vote and the support you got for this initiative—86% coming out for a vote is something we can't even hope to achieve in the rest of Canada, so we're going to try to follow your example in the future and see if we can do better at interesting people in what we're talking about. Also, the very quick passage by the provincial government is very encouraging. We know you've done your work. It's obviously a very good package here in front of us.

I do have four short questions, and they really go along the lines of some of the things Mr. Martin said. I'm interested in the five communities, the five areas where a lot of the population live. Can you tell me now, for the people who are listening to this, what kind of governance structure they exist under right now?

Second, what's going to change when this agreement's fully in place?

• (1155)

Mr. William Andersen III: To answer the first part of your question, the governance structure we're under right now is the provincial government, under the Municipalities Act in our communities. Everything else is very much similar to the rest of Canada. We have the Municipalities Act, provincial districts, and federal ridings. What will be different, I guess, after Nunatsiavut or our claim comes into effect, is that we become, in that region, a third order of government.

Along with that third order of government, we take over the municipalities, which then become community governments, but the municipalities or community governments will have representation at regional and Nunatsiavut government level. That's what's going to be different.

Mr. Roger Valley: If I understand it, they actually have mayors and councils in place right now; after the agreement is in place, they will still have mayors and councils, and that mayor, or whatever you call that person, will become part of the government. Did I understand that correctly?

Mr. William Andersen III: That's correct. Well, we have the Inuktitut name for them as leaders, *angajukkâk*, which is not a whole lot different from mayor, and they will be the representatives of their communities at Nunatsiavut government level.

Mr. Roger Valley: Good.

Can you tell me now—because, unfortunately, I haven't had the opportunity to travel to your area—the makeup of the communities? The information I'm looking for is Inuit compared to non-Inuit. Are there many non-Inuit residents in these communities, and will they be able to participate in these elections? How do you see that working? What's the format for that?

Mr. William Andersen III: In our agreement at the community government level, if there is a percentage of non-Inuit in the community, they're guaranteed a level of representation at the community government level—so, yes, they will be able to participate in community elections to elect their own representative, to ensure their interests are represented and protected.

Mr. Roger Valley: That sounds very good.

When you were actually developing this agreement, were there town hall meetings so that all residents could have input into this kind of structure? It sounds as though you've thought it out very well; I'm just wondering how you arrived at this. Was it through community input?

Mr. William Andersen III: We started the process so long ago that sometimes it's hard to remember, but every year we've had annual general meetings and information sessions in the communities. Step by step, I think we've covered off everything in terms of what the future might look like in those communities. In ensuring we're not stepping on people's toes or destroying somebody's future, we've tried to address the interests of all who live in the area as well as the interests of people we have overlap interests with.

Mr. Roger Valley: It's clear you've done your job when you can get that level of support and that number of people out to vote.

My last question, then, is what will be the involvement or the opportunities for the Inuit in the Torngat Park? I know some parks have different levels of involvement by residents or development or anything else. Can you tell us what level of involvement or opportunities the Inuit will have in that park?

• (1200)

Mr. William Andersen III: When we signed our agreement with the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on January 22, 2005, we also signed an agreement with Minister Dion on the Torngat Mountain National Park Reserve. It includes a parks impacts and benefits agreement that allows us to go into co-management with Parks Canada at the Torngat Mountain National Park Reserve. As well, there is a training component in there so that we can train our own people to become involved at the ground level in the management of the park itself.

Mr. Roger Valley: Thank you.

Just to wrap up before I get cut off, I particularly liked the way Toby Andersen raised the issue of the park as a gift to Canada. It's a very nice sentiment from somebody who's been at this as long as your people have; it's very nice that you can still think in those terms, and we'd like to thank you for that side of it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go into the second round of questions. We go back to the Conservative Party and then to the government. This is a five-minute round.

Please go ahead, Ms. Skelton.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Thank you very much.

I would like to ask if you have some female members from your negotiating team or your council and if one of the ladies would come forward to the table. I would like to ask her some questions, if that's possible.

Mr. William Andersen III: Yes, certainly.

I'll bring forth Zippie Nochasak, who is one of the vice-presidents of the Labrador Inuit Association—and yes, we did have females involved in the negotiation process. To make a point of it, this year—for the first time in its history, even though we don't have a requirement that women be involved at the board level—the Labrador Inuit Association's board of directors is fifty-fifty male and female.

Mrs. Carol Skelton: I applaud you.

Thank you for coming forward to the table. This is not usual or normal, but I would like to ask you some questions.

In one of his statements, Mr. Andersen said you cannot receive programs that other first nations people can. Can you tell me what programs you do not receive?

Ms. Zippie Nochasak (Vice-President, Labrador Inuit Association): My name is Zippie Nochasak. I'm vice-president responsible for lands and resources for the Labrador Inuit Association.

I'll try to answer your question. One of them is housing.

Mrs. Carol Skelton: You're in charge of things I'm not asking about, but in your negotiations, did you talk about matrimonial property rights and your feelings on that issue?

Ms. Zippie Nochasak: Can you explain that better, please?

The Chair: Carol, just for clarification, these are not first nations people, so we're not—

Mrs. Carol Skelton: I was wondering if they looked at it—

The Chair: In your question you said “other first nations people”. Again, that's just clarification, and I won't cut into your time. Aboriginal people of Canada are three different groups—first nations, Inuit, and Métis.

Mrs. Carol Skelton: I understand that. My terminology was wrong, Madam Chair, I'm sorry.

When you spoke among yourselves, did you talk about matrimonial property rights in your discussions among your people? When you were out visiting, doing your round tables, doing your meetings, did you talk about safe homes for your female and male people? Did you talk about all the social issues?

Mr. William Andersen III: If I may, I apologize to Zippie. I didn't explain. Zippie became a vice-president less than a year ago. Some of the questions you're flinging at her are issues we've been dealing with for years and years, but Zippie hasn't always been involved in that process.

• (1205)

Mrs. Carol Skelton: I apologize for that.

Mr. William Andersen III: We have discussed in our agreement how our matrimonial rights will be dealt with. And we're also looking at how traditional adoptions used to exist in the past, and how we might reintroduce them in the future to replace what currently exists under the provincial social services department.

Mrs. Carol Skelton: May I ask then, personally, for Zippie's feeling on this agreement? What do you personally feel? Do you think this is so important that we have to go ahead with it immediately?

Ms. Zippie Nochasak: This agreement is good.

In Inuit society, it's always been important for women and men to work together.

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll let Mr. Harrison have the last minute of questioning, if there's a minute left.

The Chair: There are only 20 seconds left.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): I'll wait until the next round.

The Chair: Okay.

We're now going to Mr. Todd Russell, our newest member of Parliament. He's filling in for one of our other members.

I welcome you to this committee, Mr. Russell.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure for me to be here.

I want to say welcome to Toby, to William, to Vervan, and of course to all those others who have come to be here today.

From one Labradorian to another, I have to say congratulations. These are the final steps in a long journey. Having been involved in aboriginal politics myself, I understand first-hand the trials and tribulations that come, but I also understand the sense of triumph and celebration that comes when you achieve something on behalf of your people. I commend each and every one of you who has been involved in the process—those who are with us today, and those who have gone on another journey—for the tremendous amount of hard work you've put in. I sincerely mean that. I say it with heartfelt and deep feelings for the contribution you've made to the Inuit of Labrador, to Labrador generally, and to Canada.

Over the last number of months in particular, I have had the opportunity to visit many of the communities on the north coast in a

way that I haven't before. I went to many doors and talked with the people, sat around their tables.

I've seen the needs that exist and that should never be forgotten, but the one thing that struck me more than anything else, I believe, was the sense of hope and enthusiasm that was generated, and is generated, around the settlement of the Labrador Inuit Association land claim agreement. You cannot deny it when you look into the eyes of some of the elders. You just cannot deny it; it is there, and it is almost a physical presence that comes out at you, especially when you speak with those people who have been relocated from Hebron and Nutak. It was a powerful experience to walk into the homes of some of the people from Hebron and Nutak, in Hopedale and Nain and other communities. I believe this agreement holds much promise and reconciliation for them.

I'm also hopeful, as your agreement goes forward, that other aboriginal agreements in Labrador will move forward as well, so that there will be reconciliation for all people in all areas. I'm a fundamental believer that the great potential of Labrador can only be realized when there is unity and harmony among all of its people, and not just some of its people. I believe this will be a first step in creating some stability, some sense of order, in Labrador. It will help that relationship move forward.

So today I just want to make a statement, not ask a question. I want to commend you for the work you have undertaken and to offer my help in the future, particularly to those most in need, who often are our elders and our youth. As a person of Inuit ancestry myself, I say thank you for the work you've done, and I look forward to the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Thank you.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Russell.

Mr. Anderson, if you wish to comment on the comment, we have a few seconds left.

Mr. William Andersen III: Thank you for the comments, Todd.

Yes, it's been a long road. We make no pretence. We've chosen our land claim area and we've chosen who our beneficiaries are going to be according to set criteria, and we will represent those people. We don't intend to go beyond that. We're hoping in the future to be able to know that we're very close. We're working closely with Nunavut and Nunavik in discussing how we might jointly approach economic development in the future as Inuit regions, and how we might work together to create bigger and better opportunities for our own people. With a Nunatsiavut government, that opportunity will open up even more.

The Chair: We now go to Mr. Cleary from the Bloc for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary: I could not find my first question. However, do you have your own constitution, like the other agreements negotiated by native peoples in Canada?

[English]

Mr. William Andersen III: Yes, we do. Our own Nunatsiavut government constitution was ratified by our membership in June of 2002. However, our constitution is developed in such a way that it will complement the intent of this final agreement among Newfoundland, Canada, and the Labrador Inuit. If there's anything in our constitution that conflicts with the agreement after it's in effect, we're required to amend our constitution so one is complementary to the other.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary: I would like to ask a question on the national park. I see that it is called a reserve. Usually, when one talks about a reserve for a park, in negotiations, it is because the lands have not yet been transferred. If I understand correctly, the lands still belong to the Government of Canada. Unless they are transferred by the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to the Government of Canada.

Do you own these lands or do you only have rights of use?

[English]

Mr. William Andersen III: The land is Canada's. In our park impacts and benefits agreement we have negotiated the right of our beneficiaries to continue to hunt, fish, and harvest for subsistence purposes in the park itself and in the waters adjacent to the park. For the technical term, I guess I can turn to Veryan or Toby. Why it became a national park reserve is something technicians can answer better than I can.

• (1215)

Mr. Veryan Haysom: Monsieur Cleary, under the national parks act the lands that are to be set aside for the national park must remain a reserve until all aboriginal claims to that land have been settled. In addition to the claims the Labrador Inuit have in that land, which won't be finally settled until this agreement is ratified by Parliament, the Nunavik Inuit claim rights in that area as well. That's part of the overlap area. It will remain a reserve until the Nunavik Inuit have settled their agreement with the federal government.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary: I have a very short final question.

Is the park managed by the Inuits? Is it co-managed by the Inuits and Parks Canada? Or is it managed only by Parks Canada?

[English]

Mr. William Andersen III: It will be co-managed by the Inuit and Parks Canada. Parks Canada now has an individual in place in Nain, Labrador, which will be the gateway to the Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve. The person on staff...they hope to hire someone who will shadow that person, an aboriginal person who will eventually become the park manager for the national park. There is an agreement that aboriginal people participate not only at the employment level but at the Nunatsiavut level as co-managers of this park area.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Cleary.

I now have Mr. St. Amand, and then we go to Mr. Harrison.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): I wish to commend you for being here and for the dignity and the quiet but persuasive passion with which you have presented this morning. I also wish to acknowledge the many individuals who are here in support of you and in support of the agreement.

It's my understanding that what your community wants more than anything is to see this agreement implemented as soon as possible, so that the very laudable goals within the agreement can be achieved as soon as possible. Am I right on that?

Mr. William Andersen III: Yes, you are right on that, but it is not only that. Every week, month, and year, from now until the agreement is ratified by government and put into effect, our own internal operations, without being able to implement self-government, are depleting the resources that we have agreed to. I mean, dipping into the resources. We have a \$50-million debt to the Government of Canada that has to be repaid, and the sooner we can get started on that, the better.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: This agreement, as I understand it, is the result—the culmination—of a long history of hard bargaining and thorough negotiating. Is that correct?

Mr. William Andersen III: That's correct.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: From your perspective, as representatives of your community, is there anything whatsoever in this agreement that is flawed or missing, that should delay the passage of it?

Mr. William Andersen III: I believe that this agreement is probably one of the most comprehensive aboriginal land claim agreements in the country. If there is something missing in there, after that many years, it's certainly our fault. We'll take the blame for that.

The process hasn't been easy, but the process changes as governments and attitudes change. You know, 25 years ago, the Government of Newfoundland didn't want to have anything whatsoever to do with us. It was the Progressive Conservative Party. Today we have a Progressive Conservative premier, and I don't believe we've had a better working relationship with a government of Newfoundland in the past. I think that to a large degree it depends on the attitude elected representatives bring to the table.

• (1220)

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: In your presentation you mentioned that economic development might be spurred or generated as a result of this agreement. That's my phrasing, rather than yours, but that was my interpretation of certain portions of your presentation—that the agreement will generate further economic development in your community. What type of economic development do you foresee occurring as a result of the agreement?

Mr. William Andersen III: With a history of European contact longer than that of most aboriginal people in Canada, the Labrador Inuit have been, I suppose, accustomed to wage economies for a lot longer period, and we have never been really opposed to economic development, whether it's renewable or non-renewable.

We do have a substantive deal with Inco and Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Limited, with an impacts and benefits agreement in place on the Voisey's Bay development. We do have two stone quarries that we started on our own, working out a deal, an international agreement, with German and Italian interests on our own. Along with that, we have this dimension stone called anorthosite, which is a granite with specks of semi-precious stone in it. We have exclusive rights to that through our agreement. We also have exclusive rights to soapstone. We have been very much a pro-development organization, and will continue to be, and will work out partnerships with whoever is interested, as long as the benefit is great to everybody concerned.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: This agreement, once passed—as soon as possible, we hope—will enhance or better partnerships that already exist and partnerships that you would like to develop in the future.

Mr. William Andersen III: That's correct.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. St. Amand.

We'll now go to Mr. Harrison from the Conservative Party.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd very much like to congratulate the Labrador Inuit people for achieving this agreement.

I'd very much like to thank our witnesses—Mr. Toby Andersen, Mr. William Andersen and Mr. Haysom—for making the trek down here. It's a long journey, and we asked you to come on short notice. We very much appreciate your being here today.

It was a 30-year process, and a lot of obstacles were overcome in that 30-year period. It's longer than I've even been around, quite frankly, and I very much applaud the determination and the great efforts that have been put into achieving this agreement.

Could you talk about some of those obstacles and some of the opposition that you had to overcome, as a people, to come to this agreement? Maybe there was even opposition you had to overcome within Labrador itself to be here today.

Mr. William Andersen III: In the initial stages.... I've been involved with the association on and off since two years after its inception. I became involved in the production of *Our Footprints Are Everywhere*.

Initially the greatest challenge we had was persuading our membership that this could become a reality. It took a number of years to do that.

One of the obstacles we faced was the Government of Canada, not because it was the Government of Canada's fault, but because when Newfoundland joined Confederation back in 1949, the then-premier Joey Smallwood apparently said that there were no aboriginal people in Labrador. That caused a problem for us. When Premier Smallwood realized a few years later that transfer dollars were available because of aboriginal people, he made the argument that, yes, we had Indians and Eskimos. Ever since then, it's been an uphill battle.

The obstacles we faced have primarily been governments that didn't want to recognize aboriginal rights in the early stages. It took us a long time to persuade them that, yes, we did have aboriginal rights and titles, and the right to negotiate those rights and titles.

Even before we really got into negotiations, the Government of Newfoundland was implementing a transfer arrangement in which they had post-secondary education funding, for example, for aboriginal people. When we got into that, this funding went from \$100,000 a year for about 20 years to what it is today—approximately \$1.2 million a year for Labrador Inuit—and since we took over the administration of the education program in 1987, we have had in excess of 400 graduates from the program.

We've proven to be very successful administrators and deliverers of programs, more effective than either level of government in our own area. That is because we know what it takes to encourage and persuade our own people to move forward in furthering their education. We're doing the same thing in the health care field now. We have been quite successful even without the land claim agreement, but with the land claim agreement, we believe we can be so much more successful.

• (1225)

Mr. Jeremy Harrison: Thank you very much for the answer.

In the later stages of the negotiations of this agreement before us today, my understanding was there was some opposition from groups within Labrador—for example, the Labrador Métis Association. Is that correct?

Mr. William Andersen III: That is correct, but we have always maintained with the Métis—and we'll go back to our early days, and I still stand by the statement—that it's up to the group to make their case to government. It's not up to another aboriginal organization to recognize whether or not another group has aboriginal rights.

We had to.... Under the James Bay agreement, we felt that our rights were extinguished in Quebec, but we didn't take the Nunavut Inuit to court over their agreements. There's a court case against ours by the Métis.

The way to achieve that is for us as a group to present a case to the Government of Canada and the appropriate provincial government—whatever case it may be—and persuade them that we do have an aboriginal claim. This is what we did. It was not based on somebody else's rights or anything like that.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison: Thank you.

The Chair: You're out of time, Mr. Harrison.

I now go to Mr. Smith from the government side.

Mr. David Smith (Pontiac, Lib.): Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here this morning. Also, congratulations for all those long years of work in achieving what you have achieved up to date. I'd also like to welcome everybody else who has joined you this morning.

One issue that is important for me to better understand would be population. How many Inuit are there? I was told there are about 5,300 Inuit. Is this so?

• (1230)

Mr. William Andersen III: Yes.

Mr. David Smith: What percentage does this represent of all the population in the community? The total communities mixed, Inuit and non-Inuit, would be how many?

Mr. William Andersen III: I'm not sure what percentage, in total, are in the communities. The 5,300 Inuit we're talking about are not necessarily all in the claim area. When we ratified our agreement, we created a system of mail-out ballots and mailed them out right across the country. We have roughly 30 members living here in Ottawa. We had to mail out ballots overseas—wherever we could track down Labrador Inuit—so that they could participate in the decision-making.

We mailed out approximately 600 ballots, of which over 500 were returned with a vote enclosed.

Mr. David Smith: To add to this, what would be the number of residents in the whole area, the claimant area we're speaking about? How many people live there? Do you have an approximate number?

Mr. William Andersen III: I would still say it's at about 5,000.

Mr. David Smith: It's 5,000 people; okay.

Based on the consulting exercises you've done, how is the reaction of the non-Inuit? Were they consulted? If so—I know it lasted for 30 years, but if we go on the last years—how is their reaction on this?

Mr. William Andersen III: Their reaction in general is very positive. Non-Inuit members, when we ratified, were just as excited as the Inuit themselves.

I'd like to make a clarification. We're talking about Labrador Inuit communities, not the settlement area. There are no settlements in the Labrador Inuit settlement area, other than Natuashish, which is an Innu community, and we have an overlap with them.

I want to be clear that it's Labrador Inuit communities we're talking about, namely—work my way north—Rigolet, Makkovik, Postville, Hopedale, and Nain; those are the five Inuit communities.

Mr. David Smith: Okay, so it's sure that the people were consulted; the majority of the non-Inuit feel very comfortable and excited with this also. You've had talks with the provincial government and have their assessment on this. Based on all of this, I imagine people within your community are very anxious for this to come true. Would this be correct?

Mr. William Andersen III: I think it's correct, generally, not only right across Labrador, but also across Newfoundland and Labrador. After the final agreement was initialled, a public consultation process took place not only in the Inuit communities, but also in the province. We did public consultations in St. John's, Corner Brook, Lab West, Goose Bay, and in our own communities. We covered a wide range of the province in order to seek support for our agreement.

Mr. David Smith: Based on those consultations, would you say the majority of the people were very favourable?

Mr. William Andersen III: Yes, they were.

Mr. David Smith: Congratulations again.

Thank you very much.

Mr. William Andersen III: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Since you have a little bit of time, I want to throw in a question from my position. I don't ask questions very often.

I noticed that your criteria for eligibility as a beneficiary include non-Inuit. I think that condition is very different from the other land claims we normally see around the country. Could you take the opportunity to explain that? If I'm correct, that has to do with Labrador settlers?

• (1235)

Mr. William Andersen III: Madam Chair, this was part of the difficulty we faced in achieving eligibility and enrolment criteria. Back in 1975-76, some members of our organization wanted to ensure that when we negotiated the land claim, settlers—or, as we call them, *Kallunângajuk*—who were permanently resident in that area should benefit from anything that we negotiated. The only way we could achieve that was, through a long process, to negotiate eligibility and enrolment criteria. How that was determined was any individuals who were permanently resident in the Labrador Inuit land claim area prior to 1940 were to become eligible beneficiaries, whether they were Inuit or not, as well as their descendants, provided they're still connected to the claim area. That's how we arrived at achieving benefits for non-Inuit, who basically adopted the Inuit tradition of living off the land, and the customs and everything.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

If I could take that one step further, what do you mean by a connection to the settlement area? I was looking through the eligibility criteria, and you mention remaining connected to the settlement area. I think maybe you're talking about some of the urban Inuit living, as you say, in Ottawa.

Mr. William Andersen III: It is not only in Ottawa, Madam Chair.

Right now, in order for anyone to become a beneficiary, if it's a young person who is not of Inuit ancestry, that person has to be able to claim both grandparents were in the claim area when they died. That way the person can become a beneficiary. If we didn't do that, we have almost as many applications on our files as we have members. They are looking for benefits and live in Corner Brook, St. John's, Vancouver, Ottawa.... We had to draw the line somewhere, and this is how we drew the line.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is the Bloc—sorry; we're now in the government-versus-opposition interchange here.

Next is Mr. Cleary.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary: Thank you.

I have not found the chapter on financial compensation. Does that mean that there isn't any or that I can't read?

[English]

Mr. William Andersen III: Chapter 19 and chapter 23. Chapter 19 at one point in history under land claims used to be called a compensation fund. Now I believe the new term is capital transfer fund. Labrador Inuit are to receive under a capital transfer fund, I believe, \$140 million in total; and under the implementation fund the Labrador Inuit are to receive approximately \$156 million. And I've been told that's in 1997 dollars.

The capital transfer is to be done, I believe, over a 14- to 15-year period and implementation is over a 10-year period.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary: I don't have any other questions and I want to conclude in congratulating you, especially for that 25% on natural resources. This is one of the highest percentages I have ever seen for all of Canada. This is extremely important for economic growth and for the development of your community. I congratulate you for your work.

[English]

Mr. William Andersen III: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cleary.

I now have Mr. Valley and then Mr. Prentice.

Mr. Roger Valley: Thank you, Madam Chair.

When Mrs. Skelton was asking a question, I thought I knew the answer and I've looked up the answer I have, but I thought I had better read it to get clarification, because she did raise a few points. Her questions or issues were somewhere around what we've all had a difficult time dealing with or listening to over the last month and a half, and that's the matrimonial and real property issues that aboriginal people have to face, not necessarily the Inuit. The answer I have, and maybe I could read it, if it would be okay, says: The government will have the ability to make laws in respect of the division of matrimonial property. However, any such laws will have to accord the rights and protections that are comparable to the rights and protections enjoyed by individuals under laws of general application.

What I take out of that is your government will have to form laws that are equal to or greater than the provincial jurisdictions that you're under right now. Is that correct?

Mr. William Andersen III: That's correct.

Mr. Roger Valley: It is an issue we've struggled mightily with and an issue that Canada's struggled with, people other than yourselves, on how we deal with this on reserve lands. She raised that, and I just wanted to make sure I have that answer correct.

This is just speculation, I guess. Until you're ready to take that state, would you mirror the provincial laws that are in place now, or will you try to devise something that serves your communities better? Do you have an impression of what you'll do with that?

Mr. William Andersen III: Until the Nunatsiavut government is ready to start implementing its own laws, and with respect to the

kinds of questions you were asking about, the Nunatsiavut government will mirror either a provincial or a federal law and will work on improvement, or a complement in those laws, because there's no point in our government developing laws that are going to conflict all the time with either a provincial or a federal law.

Mr. Roger Valley: Good.

From what I could see of the agreement, you've done an extremely good job to this point. So that's what I expected, but I thought I would clarify that, because we don't want to face the issues that we face in other jurisdictions of Canada.

Mr. Toby Andersen: Thank you.

If I could, I would just add one thing to what William said with respect not just to this particular issue but to all of the provisions in chapter 17, the self-government chapter. As William said, Nunatsiavut has to deliver programs and services that are at least equal to provincial and federal ones. All of the arguments on this in the negotiations were tough—and I have been chief negotiator of the Labrador Inuit claim for its duration. This chapter was very tough to negotiate, because you won't find this level of detail on self-government in other land claim agreements; it's very comprehensive.

We kept trying to sell an issue to the government, that we want to make it better. We can only make it better for our people under this arrangement or agreement. There is a lot of federal and provincial money out there for programs and services, but they are not being delivered in a way that really benefits our people, because the programs and services are made in the southern world and don't reflect the needs of our people. We want to be able to do that. This agreement will accomplish that.

Mr. Roger Valley: Thank you very much, and thank you for your thoroughness.

Normally, I would take offence at being called a "southerner", but I guess I am now. I'm from northern Ontario, but I guess I've relocated for the short term.

Thank you very much for your efforts.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Valley.

For the last questioner, we will go to Mr. Prentice before we wind up.

Mr. Jim Prentice: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I note in the agreement that one thing you have done, which is quite prudent, is that you've actually negotiated implementation funds.

I don't know if you're aware of this, but the Auditor General has actually been quite critical of the Government of Canada for its failure to implement these comprehensive claims once they are negotiated. The Auditor General has been quite scathing in her comments about Canada's willingness to enter into comprehensive claim settlements and inability then to implement them.

Is this why you've specifically negotiated the implementation funds? And can you just describe for us the process by which you reached this number, and how you intend to go about implementation?

•(1245)

Mr. Toby Andersen: Thank you.

I think it was a very sensitive issue with the Government of Canada. It's the first time this has happened in a land claim agreement. One of the real issues for Canada, as you've said, was the fact that you can have a land claim agreement with an implementation plan, but without any dollars negotiated to implement that plan. So the Government of Canada has had to keep coughing up money and renegotiating for implementation of the agreement year after year after year after year. The intent was to try to bring closure to that.

We were able to get an offer from the Government of Canada, so we started negotiation on this implementation fund. We felt that the dollar amount in this implementation fund would probably be sufficient, given the chapters on economic development and other things in the agreement, whereby the Nunatsiavut government would be able to derive its own source revenues. We felt that if we were able to take that ballpark figure and get fairly large payments from the Government of Canada in a short period and invest them in trust funds and accumulate interest, it would be able to help offset the implementation of this agreement. So we feel pretty comfortable that it is sufficient.

It will be a real test for the Government of Canada with the other aboriginal groups coming after us. We're certainly proud that we were able to come up with something, through tough and long negotiations, that will hopefully help solve this problem with the implementation of future claims in Canada.

Mr. Jim Prentice: I know we're running out of time, and I'm sure that Madam Chair has some closing comments, but I would like to again say thank you very much for being here.

The negotiation of comprehensive claims in Canada that we've embarked on since 1976 is one of the most exciting chapters, really, in Canadian history. We are doing things that no one else in the world has ever done. So you deserve to be very proud of the role you've played in all of that.

It's easy for someone like me to give you that compliment for the 30 years you've been working at that, but I think that if most Canadians were to stop and reflect on what this means, they'd note that the diligence, the community support, and the effort it's taken for 30 years to bring this claim to fruition speaks volumes about you and your commitment to your people and your determination as Canadians.

Thank you very much for being here.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will give you the opportunity to have your closing remarks as we come to the end of our committee meeting this morning.

Mr. Andersen.

Mr. William Andersen III: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I hope the answers we were able to provide today will help you to leave here with a clearer understanding of what you're going to do when it comes to the vote on our agreement.

I can only impress upon you.... You're politicians. I'm a politician. Right now, having signed the agreement on January 22, 2005, there's an expectation on the part of our membership to get this deal closed and to begin a new chapter in our history. As a politician, I know that the federal government now holds the purse strings to my political future. Because if you don't ratify this agreement, you may be ousting me from a job.

I encourage you.... I want you to be satisfied that our agreement is a good one, but at the same time I ask that.... For us, as a people, it's a good agreement. With that in mind, I hope we'll have your support when the bill is introduced and voted on.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

•(1250)

The Chair: Again, I thank you.

I also want to add my appreciation for your being able to come to Ottawa on very short notice. I know also that you were supposed to be hosting a national Inuit organization meeting in your community, and you crossed paths with them in heeding our call to appear before this committee. As I said in the beginning, I had hoped that we would have had the legislation here before the committee, but we certainly hope to get it in the very near future.

Again, I appreciate the time that you've taken, along with your delegation that was looking forward to hosting the ITK meeting in your community, and I appreciate that you were able to come here and meet with us instead. I certainly hope that I can visit your area, because I have not been able to get to Labrador. I had hoped to be there for the signing ceremony in January, but as we know in our part of the country, weather dictates, and I was not able to get there.

As we said before, this is a moment in history, because all Inuit groups in Canada will have signed their agreements once this legislation goes through our parliamentary system.

We were saying that this room has been extremely warm because the air conditioner wasn't working yesterday during our caucus. So I'm very thankful that we were able to provide a little cooler weather here for you. I tell everyone that I get through the warm weather in Ottawa knowing that there is ice and snow where we are at this time. I appreciate your exchanging your beautiful spring weather for this incredible heat here in Ottawa.

On behalf of my committee, congratulations on a well-deserved ending to your long process. As Todd was saying, we do think of the people who worked on this long road with you and who are not here to share the day with you, and we certainly look forward to your bill coming through the parliamentary process and getting through the Senate, hopefully with the royal assent, before we adjourn for the summer.

Thank you to all the witnesses and to the committee members.

The meeting is adjourned.

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