

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 22, 1992

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

NATIONAL PARKS ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. Tom Hockin (for the Minister of the Environment) moved that Bill C-59, an act to amend the National Parks Act be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Natural Resources envelope.

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, the bill which is before us today is an important one. Hon. members will discover it is a bill which will be well received as it reflects important partnerships we are developing with aboriginal peoples.

This bill is divided into two major purposes. First of all, the bill will deal with Environment Canada's responsibility for the fulfilment of Treaty No. 8 obligations, flowing from the Cree Band of Fort Chipewyan land claim settlement of 1986.

In that settlement Canada, Alberta and the band agreed that additional entitlements under the treaty would include provision of some 12,000 acres of land for Indian reserve purposes and \$26.6 million compensation.

Environment Canada's specific role in the settlement concerns Wood Buffalo National Park which straddles the boundary of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. This park, the second largest in the world, overlays the approximately three million acre traditional hunting grounds of the Cree. Following a settlement it was necessary to prepare a complex boundary survey of this area of the park for insertion in the National Parks Act.

While I must point out that the area will remain subject to the National Parks Act, this bill confirms the right of the Cree Band of Fort Chipewyan to hunting, fishing, trapping and cultural pursuits in their traditional lands within the park.

• (1010)

The bill confirms not only rights to wilderness, it also excises the small community of Peace Point from within the park boundary to enable its establishment as an Indian reserve. This is being done as part of the claims settlement in recognition of the understandable wish of the Cree of Peace Point to greater control over their own affairs.

The final element of the bill affecting Wood Buffalo is the formal establishment of a wildlife advisory board. This board, which has been operating informally but effectively for several years, enables the Cree to participate meaningfully in decision making which directly affects their way of life.

It is indicative of the kinds of partnerships which must be established with native people to ensure that Canada's wilderness values are enriched and the ethics of wilderness protection are shared among all Canadians.

Therefore in this bill we are formally recognizing the long-standing relationship and affinity of the Cree to lands which, by agreement, remain under the protection of the National Parks Act. Moreover we are helping to perpetuate a tradition for caring for the land from which all Canadians can learn.

In 1983 UNESCO declared Wood Buffalo National Park a world heritage site. It was largely because of the contributions of native peoples for the continued protection of this marvellous part of Canada that this international honour was accorded.

The second purpose of this bill concerns a matter with which all members will be familiar. In fact it was the subject of an all-party resolution made in this House in 1987. I am speaking of course of the establishment of the National Park Reserve in the Queen Charlotte Islands of British Columbia, along with the authorization of a unique management agreement with the Council of the Haida Nation.