

Government Orders

With respect to the two Labrador claims—and I will focus on the one with the Labrador Inuit in particular—we have been engaged in a process of setting the stage for negotiations going back to at least 1989 and perhaps earlier in the case of the Labrador Inuit Association. I was able to travel to Nain in Labrador and sign a framework agreement, I believe in November 1990, which set the stage for negotiating what was then called the agreement in principle. Our policy is that when we are going to negotiate an agreement in principle we have to know that the provincial government, within whose jurisdiction this claim is to be settled, must be a partner in those negotiations. To be a partner we have to know what its role and responsibility is going to be and how it intends to share in all of the elements of settlement—dollars, land, mineral rights, timber rights, water resources, et cetera.

• (1210)

It is not fair to sit down at the table with a First Nation such as the Labrador Inuit Association and go through the process of trying to negotiate a land claim settlement if the province is not a committed partner. We need commitments of the jurisdictions the province is prepared to cede, the land it is prepared to make available and the financial burden that it is prepared to bear.

In our policy we require a cost-sharing agreement before we get into the agreement in principle stage. The agreement in principle negotiation encompasses the global magnitude of the land claim settlement, how much land, how many mineral rights, how many dollars.

We told the province of Newfoundland and Labrador that we needed a cost-sharing agreement but we agreed to take 18 more months, until June 1992, to achieve it. I am sorry to say that we have not made the kind of progress we should have made because the province of Newfoundland and Labrador has not been prepared to quantify what it will accept as its role, its responsibility and its share of the financial and material burden of settlement.

It is not correct to suggest that the federal government has not tried to advance the Labrador Inuit claim, nor the claim that we have agreed to negotiate with the Innu

Nation, which I accepted I believe a year and a half ago. In both cases we need to have a clear statement of the commitment of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador toward its share of the obligation to settle. It will have to cede jurisdiction in certain areas, and particularly if we get into discussing self-government in the context of the claim, it will have to give up land rights and forestry rights and water rights, et cetera.

That is the reason why we have not been able to move to the next stage of concluding agreements in principle with the Innu Nation or the Labrador Inuit Association. I commend the LIA for the proposal it presented to the province a week ago in St. John's because it shows its recognition that the province, the premier and the government of Newfoundland and Labrador have to be at the table and to participate. We will review that proposal very thoroughly. We are prepared to continue negotiations but there has to be a clear understanding of the role and responsibility and the degree of commitment from the provincial government.

Mr. Rompkey: Madam Chairman—

The Chairman: I will recognize the hon. member. I do have to remind the hon. member and the minister that getting into the very important question of Labrador takes us somewhat outside the scope of the bill in front of the House right now.

I will recognize the hon. member from the New Democratic Party and I will come back to the member.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Madam Chairman, I do appreciate that ruling very much. In the limited time we have available there are some important matters specific to this bill that should be addressed.

I have a couple of questions. I will put one and hopefully I can be recognized again on another question.

I am interested in knowing specifically about some of the negotiations that the minister may be involved in concerning the trusts. I am told that under this bill the department and the bands are actively engaged in trying to settle a Revenue Canada issue related to the trusts. I wonder if the minister could tell us where this matter is now.