

*Government Orders*

What we are doing here today is welcoming a new partner into the Canadian federation.

[*Translation*]

I want to congratulate and thank the people of Nunavut for their vision and for their determination to achieve that vision. I also want to thank all the people of the Northwest Territories who supported our aspirations by voting with us in the plebiscite a year ago. The dream of Nunavut, of getting recognition of our Inuit homeland, and recognition of our right to participate in the government and development of that homeland is a dream that goes back many, many years.

I remember a meeting of the Inuit Tapirisat in 1975 in Tuktoyaktuk at which we were discussing a name for our new territory. I moved the motion at that meeting to call the new territory Nunavut. In English, Nunavut means "our land". That motion was adopted, and now here I am today, 18 years later, speaking on the bill that will recognize the Nunavut territory.

[*English*]

For the benefit of non-Inuit, Inuit means "the people" and I repeat that Nunavut means "our land".

I want Canadians, including members of this House, to understand that Nunavut exists now and has always existed in the minds and hearts of Inuit. We know Nunavut is our land. What we have been seeking throughout the years is the acknowledgement by the Canadian government that this was, and is, our land and that we have the right to control what happens to that land, our homeland.

This bill, the Nunavut act, does not give us Nunavut. However this bill does give us Canada's acknowledgement and Canada's legal recognition of the reality we have always known. It also gives us the opportunity to participate in the government of our land on terms we have helped to develop. This is very important.

[*Translation*]

When the non-Inuit arrived in our homeland, when Canada was confederated, no one asked us for our opinion. No one asked for our consent to the terms of union. No one asked us for our advice. No one asked us how we felt.

Foreign governments and foreign laws and foreign regulations were imposed on us. For years we have lived with the burden of an alien system.

With the establishment of Nunavut, we hope we will finally be able to get out from underneath what has been imposed upon us. For Inuit, the Nunavut political accord and this Nunavut bill are essentially our terms of union, the framework for our entry into the Canadian federation.

[*English*]

We want to be able to control our destiny by making our own laws and regulations. We want the chance to make our own mistakes and learn from them.

• (1355 )

We want to contribute our unique knowledge, skills and talents to the building and strengthening of this nation. The creation of the Nunavut territory gives us the opportunity to do this. I want to talk for a short while about the history behind this bill and the concept of two territories instead of one in the Northwest Territories.

It seems to be the fate of the Northwest Territories to be continually divided. The province of Manitoba was created from the Northwestern Territory in 1870. The Yukon was established in 1898 and the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were carved out in 1905. The current Northwest Territories is what remained after the creation of all those other jurisdictions. However it is still a huge area. It encompasses fully one-third of the land mass of Canada.

Further division of the existing Northwest Territories is not a new idea. It is an idea that has been around for a long time. It is an idea whose time has finally come.

For the record this is not the first time this House has seen a bill to divide the Northwest Territories. In 1963