

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being two o'clock, the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

NUNAVUT

Mr. Patrick Boyer (Etobicoke—Lakeshore): Mr. Speaker, the creation of Nunavut has been a dream of Inuit leadership since the 1970s.

The people of the eastern Arctic have sought a new jurisdiction in this country consistent with their desire to govern themselves and manage their own affairs. In this whole process, the people and Government of the Northwest Territories have been fully involved.

First, division of NWT was approved in principle by a majority of voters in a plebiscite in 1982. Second, in May this year a majority of voters approved the precise location of the new boundary in a second plebiscite.

On October 30, the Nunavut political accord was signed by the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut.

Now, in a referendum held between November 3 and November 5, Inuit voters overwhelmingly said yes to the accord. With an 80 per cent turn-out, 69 per cent of the voters said yes and people who were not voting were counted as no votes. That is a very significant level of approval.

Accordingly the Government of Canada will be introducing legislation at the time of the claim settlement legislation to divide the Northwest Territories and set up Nunavut. A happy day, particularly because the peoples themselves have been directly involved in making these decisions.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I call on the government to reassure the veterans of Canada

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that the benefits and the programs it provides will continue as long as there are needy and disabled Canadians who need them.

Seventy-five years ago the Prime Minister of Canada promised the veterans of World War I that they would be cared for by a grateful nation. Today there is fear among the veteran population that this government is planning to abandon the veterans and the department in the name of cost efficiency.

I understand that at least 250 positions at DVA will be declared surplus. I also understand that the department is looking at a merger with the Department of National Defence.

We wonder if this government is also looking at taxing or cutting veterans benefits. It is time for the government to make a clear recommitment to the veterans of Canada.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, this government's economic policies have been a disaster for Canada. The Conservative government and the previous Liberal government before it have followed policies which have increased unemployment in Canada.

On some of the reserves in my riding of Churchill and across Canada the unemployment rate exceeds 90 per cent. This desperate situation is made worse by inadequate housing and a lack of sewer and water facilities. Many reserves do not have permanent roads into their communities and others still rely on run-down diesel generators for electricity.

This lack of necessary houses and infrastructure creates an opportunity for the government. A water and sewage program along with a program to improve housing could employ people in both native and many other communities across Canada. These programs would improve the quality of life for thousands of native people.

I strongly urge the federal government to introduce these programs now in order to create jobs and to help make life for Canada's native peoples much better.