

Since I moved to Resolute I have never wanted to move back—If I wanted to move back to Inoucdjouac (Inukjuak), I think the government might agree to help me.

He also recounts in his story his life in Inukjuak prior to his move and he clearly indicates that there was no coercion involved in his decision to move to Resolute Bay.

• (1150)

There are many other letters in existence written by Inuit at Resolute Bay to relatives and to social workers in the department. They testify to the satisfaction of hunting conditions that were found in the high Arctic. Oral evidence also alludes to some misunderstandings at the time of the move. I can assure the House that there is no question that the best motivations dictated the relocation of the Inukjuak Inuit to the high Arctic. I suggest, however, that many of the misunderstandings may well have occurred because of language difficulties.

Perhaps the major contention of the Inukjuak Inuit was that the federal government had promised them that they could return to their homes at government expense if, after two or three years, they were not happy with their new location. After careful investigation, I am satisfied that some promises were made. As I mentioned, however, many of the letters written by the Inuit did not express a desire to leave and letters written by residents in the late fifties and early sixties in fact spoke of the desire to have family members join them at Resolute Bay.

Residents of the Inukjuak area continued to move north until the late fifties at which time entry to these communities was closed because they became overcrowded.

The earliest request to return on record came in 1960 when a request was made to go back to Inukjuak for a visit. There were virtually no Inuit who expressed a desire to leave the high Arctic for good at that time and there are a number of reasons why people requested to return. Many were not dealt with until 20 to 30 years after the original move. The lack of adequate transportation, which I mentioned, was one of the reasons. Travel arrangements at that time were not easily made. The only means available was by the annual supply ship which arrived and left in late summer.

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As well, time lapses between the expression of the desire to leave and the finalization of those arrangements were lengthy. It is not to say that the government was not willing to try, but rather the problems encountered were cumbersome and restrictive. Indeed, in the early 1970s the RCMP used their own aircraft to arrange visits to the Northwest Territories, reimbursed by Canada, and was returning a few Inuit to Inukjuak. Still one fact is clear—at no time did the Canadian government refuse outright any Inuit request for return.

Another problem with moves back to Inukjuak was the lack of housing. If people went back, there was no housing available to them at that time. In 1988, however, DIAND did contribute \$700,000 to assist the Government of Quebec in building 10 new homes to accommodate those wishing to return.

It is also likely that requests from the Inuit to return occurred long after the two or three years that the departmental officials had assumed would be the time-frame within which people would want to return home. Nonetheless, returns did continue.

Speaking now for the present, let me make it clear that the government believes it has a moral obligation to fulfil the promise to return those who wish to go back. The department has already spent in excess of some \$250,000 on direct relocation costs to date. It stands ready to complete the relocation of those Inuit who wish it.

In light of this information, I feel that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has nothing to apologize for in the manner in which the relocation project was conceived, planned and carried out.

In fact, I would like to quote from the findings of the independent consultant who was acceptable at the time to the Makivik Corporation on this particular question.

The offer was made of three names. It was not a case of picking one person and saying: "You have to accept it." There was an offer made of three different groups and they accepted one of the three.

I quote from this report:

The evidence that we examined does not support the allegation that the government committed wrongdoing in the planning and conduct of this project.