

Government Orders

The people of Nunavut have been the architects of this transformation.

• (1345)

While it might be unconventional I would like to ask Mr. Quassa and Pauloosie Keyootak, the representatives here today, to stand and be recognized by the House of Commons in view of their wonderful contribution in a new partnership with Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Siddon: I have enjoyed a wonderful relationship with some people who have become genuine friends and have shown me the way to find a better future for Canada.

I sense that you might find within the House the disposition to agree at this stage to proceed through all stages and to conclude this day before we rise the adoption at third reading of Bill C-132, the Nunavut Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Agreed and so ordered.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Before I get to my comments I would also like to acknowledge the support of people like Raymond Ningeochek, Pauloosie Keyootak, Joe Allen Evyagotailak, Rhoda Inukshuk, the former President of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada whom I omitted for no reason but forgetfulness. They have worked very hard toward the negotiations.

I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support I received from my family who are in the audience from our smallest to the oldest. I acknowledge their support.

I want to comment on the minister's comment can we afford not to. It reminds me of the commercial can we afford not to? I think that is the question. I cannot remember which commercial, but can we afford not to? Canadians should be asking themselves that in getting Nunavut as part of the Canadian federation.

As I said earlier, it is a real honour to be here today to speak on the Nunavut bill, Bill C-132. This is the bill that

will create the new territory of Nunavut. This bill flows from the land claim agreement. Article 4 of the agreement in principle signed in April 1990 committed the parties to the political development of Nunavut.

The article committed the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut, on behalf of the Inuit of Nunavut, to the creation of a Nunavut territory, and the financing of a Nunavut government, outside of the claims agreement, as soon as possible.

It is important to note that the commitment to create the Nunavut territory is outside of the claims agreement. Government policy would not allow the Inuit to negotiate the political development of Nunavut within their land claim agreement.

[*Translation*]

Nevertheless, the government support for Nunavut, even though outside the land claim agreement, was a key victory for Inuit. Without this commitment to Nunavut, Inuit were not prepared to settle their land claim. Settlement of the land claim depended on obtaining the commitment to Nunavut.

[*English*]

Article 4 of the agreement in principle also committed the parties to a territory-wide plebiscite on a boundary for division, and an agreement on the division of powers.

That plebiscite was held, a boundary was approved and the Nunavut political accord was signed.

Flowing from all these prior decisions and agreements is the bill before us now, Bill C-132, the act to establish the new Nunavut territory. This is a proud and historic moment for me and for all the Inuit of Nunavut.

• (1350)

As I noted in my earlier speech on the land claims bill, I do not believe that ever before in this House has a member of Parliament spoken in such a capacity, both as a representative for the region concerned and as a beneficiary of the land claims agreement to which this bill is tied. It is a very special feeling for me and today is a very special day. This is a proud and historic moment for the people of Canada.