

*Government Orders*

Second, would the minister take some time to reflect on how he intends to do that and what process he intends to use to speed up the settlement of land claims across the country?

I also want to ask him a supplementary question and in so doing read to him a news account of what happened in St. John's, Newfoundland, within the past two days. As he knows, the news report I have before me says that at a news conference on Tuesday at the Hotel Newfoundland, Labrador Inuit Association President William Andersen III presented Premier Clyde Wells with a thick black binder containing what he said he hoped was the future of the Inuit in Labrador. Federal officials were absent from the ceremony. The article says that the federal government pulled out of the land claims process in June 1992 when it was unable to reach an agreement with the province on sharing the cost of any settlement reached.

Now that we have the Labrador Inuit land claims on track, now that we have a preliminary proposal on paper, not a total proposal but a preliminary proposal on paper, now that there is a time track agreed to for a response from the province within three months, and now that there is the undertaking to speedily resolve this particular land claim, does the minister see his way clear to overcoming whatever obstacles were there in the past between the two governments to study this document carefully, to consider it carefully in a comprehensive way, in dialogue with the province and with the Inuit of northern Labrador? Does he think it is possible for all three parties, without preconditions, to go back to the table to study and consult in a serious way with a view to resolving this land claim as quickly as possible?

• (1200)

The other supplementary question I should like to ask him, because it is a pressing issue too, concerns the land claim of the Innu nation in Labrador and in Quebec as well. I do not have to mention it to the minister. He knows as well as I do and as well as all members of the House and all Canadians do the serious and tragic events that took place recently in Davis Inlet.

As I said in the House yesterday, now that the camera has moved away from Davis Inlet and has focused on

other places, it is important that we not forget our responsibilities to that particular community, but we have to see that in the context of a settlement of land claims.

I know this is not completely on topic, but I think the people of Canada, the House and you, Madam Chairman, understand it is so seldom we have the opportunity to put these serious and important questions that I wanted to take the opportunity to do so today.

**Mr. Siddon:** Madam Chairman, I say to my hon. colleague that I appreciate the questions. While we do hope to conclude consideration of this piece of legislation today, and I am sure there is other pressing House business, I certainly welcome the opportunity to take a few minutes to respond to his questions.

First, on the question of moving more quickly toward the settlement of land claims I would like to suggest that is a commitment I have taken very seriously in the last three years as minister. Shortly after my appointment I had the privilege of concluding and initialling an umbrella final agreement with the Council of Yukon Indians, of initialling the Dene-Métis final settlement agreement in the western Arctic within a week, and within a month, on April 30, 1990, of having signed the agreement in principle with the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut which will lead to the ultimate conclusion of the land claim agreement of the Inuit of eastern Arctic.

The Prime Minister gave a speech in the House on September 24, 1990 as part of a comprehensive set of accelerated initiatives on behalf of Canada's aboriginal people. He said that we would give high priority to moving land claims to completion and that both in the area of specific claims and comprehensive claims we would hope to achieve major progress, if not to settle all those claims by the end of the decade, by the turn of the century.

It is important to realize that in the area of land claims there are three categories. The first one is those areas where we made treaty commitments and did not keep them. Today's bill is an example of fulfilling that commitment in Saskatchewan to treaty land allocations that were promised in those early numbered treaties across the prairies.