

*Government Orders*

We intend to establish the commission in the near future. Indeed the bill provides that it must be established within six months of granting royal assent. The commission will continue its critical role until it is disbanded no later than three months after the creation of the new territory. When Nunavut is created it will have a commissioner as is the case in Yukon and the Northwest Territories. That would be after 1999.

In the past commissioners for the territories have often wielded considerable powers. In recent years as responsible government in the north has grown the office of the commissioner has become largely symbolic. Some would say it has evolved to a lieutenant governor-like function.

This new role is reflected in the Nunavut bill. Bill C-132 also provides for the creation of an executive council for Nunavut. This council will be similar to a provincial executive council or cabinet and will be appointed by the commissioner on the advice of the legislative assembly of Nunavut. This is a reflection of the way in which the cabinet is currently appointed in Northwest Territories.

The new territorial government will have a comparable range of law making powers now enjoyed by other territorial governments. In addition the Nunavut act specifically provides that the Nunavut legislature may pass laws to implement the Nunavut land claim agreement and to preserve and enhance the Inuktitut language.

• (1340)

Nunavut will have the authority to enter into agreements with the federal and provincial governments and will be authorized to manage and sell public lands that are under the care of the commissioner.

I should also point out that there will be an interim commissioner established during the transitional period to begin to prepare for the establishment officially of the office of commissioner after 1999 and to begin to exercise commissioner-like authorities in the transitional period.

Hon. members should also be aware that Bill C-132 makes necessary consequential amendments to other federal legislation. These are essentially housekeeping amendments to reflect the division of the current Northwest Territories into two separate territories.

Bill C-132 will also move the government down the road to achieving its vision for the north, a vision of social and economic development that respects the

environment and that first and foremost brings benefit to the residents of Nunavut.

There have been questions about the costs and the necessity of this government. Perhaps we will have an opportunity to discuss that during the Committee of the Whole. I would like to suggest that there is always an appropriate form of government to be found which best suits the needs of a people.

It seems rather obvious to me that a government in Yellowknife or Ottawa comprised of non-Inuit people is not the best government located 2,000 or more miles away to serve the interests and purposes of the Inuit people.

There is an appropriate structure of government to be established within our traditions of Parliament, a government which will be largely comprised of Inuit people who are the majority in that area and whose children will become the architects and the beneficiaries of the authorities which that government will exercise into the next century.

This legislation provides for initial powers to be established in 1999 involving a territorial assembly, a—forgive me the word—bureaucracy and a court. Over the period between there and the year 2008 there will be other powers and authorities added as it becomes appropriate to devolve or relocate those powers from Yellowknife or Ottawa where they presently reside.

I think this is an eminently logical approach. I should say, in regard to the question of cost, Canadians cannot afford to continue the cost of an insensitive system which is remote from the needs of the people. Canadians cannot afford not to support the creation of Nunavut. I believe with the kind of wisdom, the persistence and the practical creativity of the Inuit people who have existed all of those centuries in Nunavut, we will see an appropriate form of government established which will not be a burden to other Canadians but indeed something which we can all celebrate.

Before I sit, I should pay a debt of gratitude to the negotiators who served the federal and territorial governments so well. I will not name them right now, but perhaps there will be a moment toward the end of the debate. However, I do want to name here and to recognize in the gallery Mr. Paul Quassa, Mr. Louis Pilakapsi, Mr. James Eetoolook and other members of the Board of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut, together with those who have guided this process in other ways such as John Amagoalik, Jack Anawak, if I might be permitted to name a member, Thomas Suluk, Rosemary Kuptana, Dennis Patterson, Titus Alloo.oo.