

Government Orders

This is an enormous package of benefits and one cannot help but be struck with the fact there are so few people who stand to receive them. The Sahtu ratification committee has provided us with the most recent count of participants in the settlement area. It numbers 982 adults, that is 829 Dene and 153 Metis, and 773 children for a total of 1,755 people.

I would ask the minister as to the rationale the government has applied in arriving at this huge package of benefits for such a relatively small number. How has the sum of \$130 million been arrived at? Is there any indication it is appropriate to the needs of the participants? Will this enormously generous package of benefits result in the regular programs available to native peoples being phased out? There is no indication in the agreement that this is to be so. In fact, the very opposite is said to be the case.

A very disturbing aspect of this agreement is the fact that a massive area of land will be forever removed from the public lands of Canada and conveyed outright. An area equivalent to three-quarters the size of Nova Scotia will be conveyed to a collectivity totalling 1,755 people. In our view, conveyances of this kind are unnecessary, should not be made and are not in keeping with what the courts of Canada have found to constitute aboriginal rights.

The area north of the 60th parallel throughout Canada has always been considered to be a part of the public lands of Canada in which all Canadians share an interest. This is the fourth land claim settlement undertaken by recent federal governments in the territories. It is apparent there is very little left of the Northwest Territories which has not either been conveyed outright to various bands or over which they have a substantial measure of control.

It is apparent it is the intention of successive governments of Canada to blanket all of Canada's north with land claim settlements of this kind. One could understand granting to a sparse northern population traditional rights of hunting, fishing and trapping, subject to third party interests. But it is quite another matter to convey the outright ownership of vast territories of land. It is not necessary and my party opposes it.

It is noted that subsurface rights are also transferred under a portion of the property to be conveyed outright to the Sahtu Dene and Metis under this agreement. I wonder if the minister can tell us if the Government of Canada has any idea of the potential in mineral and oil and gas exploration that exists in respect of these subsurface rights. If not, this represents a potential transfer of unknown proportions.

We do not believe that land claim settlements of this kind should be open-ended or represent a blank cheque. After all, these are the public lands of Canada and the Government of

Canada has a duty to all Canadians to administer them in the best interests of all. Massive transfers run contrary to this principle.

The agreement sets out a plethora of new administrative tribunals and other bureaucratic instruments that are going to be established. The same can be said to have been the case in regard to the three previous land claim settlements in the territories. In fact in the case of the Nunavut agreement, a whole new government is proposed to be established: a legislature and a court system including the Supreme Court of Nunavut and the court of appeal.

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In the case of the agreement before us today, it is noted that five renewable resource councils are to be established for each of the Sahtu communities of Colville Lake, Déline, Fort Norman, Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells to manage the exercise of harvesting rights.

A renewable resource board is to be established as the main instrument of wildlife management in the settlement area. Six members are to be nominated by the government and three by the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

An arbitration panel is to be established to attempt to settle disputes relating to this agreement without going to court. A land use planning board is to be established to prepare a land use plan providing for the conservation, development and utilization of land, resources and water in the settlement area. Again the Sahtu Dene and Metis can nominate 50 per cent membership on such a board.

A land and water board is to be established to regulate all land and water use within the settlement area. The environment impact review board and the surface rights board established to implement the earlier Gwich'in agreement are to have jurisdiction over the area with special panels established with the Sahtu tribal council having the right to nominate half of the members.

One has to question the necessity of setting up still another plethora of boards, commissions and instrumentalities within the Northwest Territories. The fact of the matter is that most of these functions are now being administered by existing instrumentalities of either the Government of the Northwest Territories or the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

There is no obvious consideration in the agreement given to winding down existing boards. Layer of government upon layer of government in the sparsely populated Northwest Territories is not the way to go. We are in danger of turning a sparse population into a bevy of bureaucrats, yet one of the main stated purposes of the agreement is to permit pursuit of a traditional livelihood and way of life.

Later this year the government is expected to introduce the Mackenzie Valley resource management act which it is said will fulfil the resource requirements of the various regional land