

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 4, 1993

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

[English]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-15, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (sexual orientation), to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NUNAVUT LAND CLAIMS AGREEMENT ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved that Bill C-133, an act respecting an agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut settlement area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Human Resources envelope.

He said: Madam Speaker, I want to speak this morning to my hon. colleagues about Bill C-133, which would give effect to the Nunavut land claims agreement.

One of the happiest moments of my life as Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development occurred when I joined with the Prime Minister last Tuesday in Iqaluit to sign the Nunavut land claims agreement.

As a result of this agreement there is a new spirit of optimism and a new energy among the Inuit of the eastern Arctic region. I noted the applause of the hon. member for Nunatsiak. We very much appreciate his support and enthusiastic participation at the event last week.

I was struck by the tears of happiness and joy by the elders who gathered at Inukshuk School in Iqaluit with the children and the people of the eastern Arctic to celebrate this historic signing.

As we listened to Susan Aglukark sing *O Canada* in Inuktitut we sensed the confidence, joy and pride, especially of the children, as they anticipated a new future relationship with all the people of Canada.

I am personally committed to ensuring implementation of the land claims agreement by guiding this bill through Parliament. I know I am supported in this process by the Prime Minister who has given his unflinching support to this project. He has shown exceptional vision and commitment in addressing aboriginal and northern issues, including the recognition of Nunavut. I am also supported by my cabinet colleagues, who have approved the Nunavut land claims agreement which we debate today.

• (1010)

I am supported by the Inuit of the eastern Arctic. Without their determination, without their commitment to settling this land claim, we would not have reached the critical stage we are at today.

Bill C-133 gives effect to the Nunavut land claims agreement to settle the land claim of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut which represents Inuit in the eastern Arctic. This agreement, which has been pursued over a period of 17 years going back to 1976, was endorsed last November by 69 per cent of Inuit living in the settlement region, and of those who actually voted 85 per cent approved the land claims settlement. This is an overwhelming show of support and it sends an important message to this House of the commitment that the Inuit wish to make to be partners in Canada.

The TFN land claim is the largest in Canadian history. It encompasses approximately one-fifth of the entire Canadian land mass, an area of some two million square kilometres in the central and eastern Arctic as well as adjacent offshore areas. That is known as the settlement area but is not to be confused with the actual lands to be owned by the Inuit, which are approximately 20 per cent of that amount.