

been in this country for a long period of time. Some worry that it has no definition. Some worry that they cannot lay it down on a sheet of paper and follow it through. I understand that concern but it is not one that I particularly share myself.

To me self-government meets the concept of self-determination: responsibility for oneself and one's people. Self-government means that you have, as one of my colleagues today referred to, the ability to manage oneself and take the risks that are involved in that. It is to be able to ensure that the community says what happens to the community. The community makes the decisions not only in what it does but in the values that are the guideposts to those decisions. They are not values that are set or perceived in Ottawa or Vancouver or Halifax or, for that matter, perhaps Yellowknife or Whitehorse, but values that are of that community.

Because the history, the culture, the social conditions, the economic opportunities and the value systems change from community to community, the actual definition of self-government will change. Self-government for the Innu people and ultimately the people of Davis Inlet, or whatever term one wants to use, is the ultimate goal. The achievement by those people to be able to manage their present and therefore their future without the encumbrance of government but with the responsibility for themselves and their children and the responsibility over the resources that they will manage is something they want to attain. It is something to which I, this government and the members opposite are fundamentally committed.

The attainment of that is essential. It is an expressed wish of the people of Davis Inlet and the Innu nation that we reach conclusions on land claims in this area. I have given them my commitment. The minister has written that it is very much our interest to continue to pursue that.

We all recognize however, including the people in Labrador, that this will take some time. It is essential to me and to all the people I talked to that we not lose focus in dealing with Davis Inlet. We must recognize that the people of that community are our number one concern. The families, men, women and children of Davis Inlet can never leave our minds in light of land claims, the concepts of self-government and major and substantial policy issues that are on a national stage that

involve all aboriginal people and that must be solved and that do impact on the people of Davis Inlet.

However, if we are going to tie the success of the transfer of the community to the resolution in absolute terms of those issues, then we will never get to the problem of the people of Davis Inlet. This is a problem that they want to resolve and we have the obligation to work with them to resolve it. It does not mean that we turn our back on land claims, absolutely not. It does not mean we abandon self-government. Quite the contrary. It means that we look at things in context. We look at what is important, the people of the community.

• (1940)

In response to some very serious needs in the community we were able to provide some emergency short-term funding, quite substantial funding I might add.

We recognize the process that must be used by the community and the Innu people to reach agreement on the wording of the memorandum of understanding. It will lead us to the process of defining the new community based on the vision of the people of that community and is one that will primarily involve extensive consultation.

Yes, it will involve engineers, planners, economic experts and health experts. Even they ultimately must be prepared to respond to what it is the people of Davis Inlet feel will make their community work for them.

I believe absolutely that when the Davis Inlets of this country work for the people in those communities, they will work for every one of us in this country. They will work for all Canadians. As every Davis Inlet in this country becomes a better place in which to live, this country becomes a better place in which to live.

I believe absolutely that we together, led by the people of those Davis Inlets will find the solution so that the next generation does not go through this, so that we avoid that. We must be there with them to find those solutions.

Ms. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the speech by the hon. member. He has spent a lot of time on aboriginal issues in our committee as well as with the