

Government Orders

As a member of Parliament from Saskatchewan representing a large rural constituency, I have had a very important interest in this matter since my election in 1988. I have discussed this entire agreement with a number of the chiefs in my own constituency. I have attended a number of the meetings in which the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations has discussed this at open forums.

• (1135)

I have recognized the significant contribution of each of those who have participated in this process. Of the 27 bands referred to in the land entitlement process, the majority reside on reserves in my constituency: Canoe Lake Band, Chief Guy Larivière; Flying Dust Band, Chief Richard Gladue; Joseph Bighead Band, Chief Ernest Sundown; Little Pine Band, Chief Johnson Kakum; Moosomin Band, now Chief Clarence Louis; Muskeg Lake Band, Chief Harry Lafond; Pelican Lake Band, Chief Edward Bill; Saulteaux Band, Chief Gabriel Gopher; Thunderchild Band, now Chief Winston Weekusk; Witchekan Lake Band, Chief Mike Fineday; Mosquito/Grizzly Bear's Head/Lean Man Band, now Chief Clarence Stone; Onion Lake Band, Chief Joe Waskewitch; Red Pheasant Band, Chief Mike Baptiste. These are all bands within my federal constituency. These are bands that have actively participated throughout this process and have done a tremendous service to their people and to the people of Saskatchewan.

We will recall, as the minister of Indian affairs noted in his remarks, that the framework agreement was signed on September 22, 1992 by the premier of Saskatchewan, the Prime Minister of Canada and the chiefs of the entitlement bands at a ceremony at Wanuskewin Heritage Park, north of Saskatoon. I attended it as a member of the audience. It was a very proud moment for all the chiefs in attendance.

The agreement makes funding available from Saskatchewan and the federal government to the entitlement bands to assist them in the purchase of private and Crown lands to fulfil the outstanding treaty land entitlements.

Just to review this for all present in the House and for those who are watching, five treaties were signed by

Canada with Saskatchewan Indian bands between 1874 and 1906. The bands were promised reserve land based on their population. In 1992, when the framework agreement was signed, 27 bands in the province still had not received all the land owed to them under the treaties. The entitlement framework agreement provides the way to rectify this situation.

I must stress once again that this has been a long time in coming. In 1976 the then New Democratic Party government led by Allan Blakeney reached a conclusion that now forms the basis of the agreement that has been reached by the bands, the province of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada today. The 1976 formula was the basis on which Treaty Commissioner Cliff Wright established the final package.

Under the framework agreement that we are dealing with the bands can purchase a minimum of 421,000 acres and are eligible to buy up to a maximum of 1.693 million acres for reserve status. All land purchases will be on a willing seller-willing buyer basis.

Bands are able to purchase private lands as well as federal and provincial Crown lands. Before the sale of Crown land the interest in the land of any occupants or other third parties must be satisfactorily addressed. In the case of private land, third party interests must be suitably dealt with as a part of the purchase and reserve creation process.

This is part of the agreement because the Indian people throughout Saskatchewan have recognized very clearly that there are other people currently utilizing the land base they have claimed. They want to ensure that there is a continuation of the good rapport of people who share the land in that particular area. Indian and non-Indian people alike will be living and working together in the same areas.

• (1140)

The framework agreement provides bands with approximately \$450 million, spread over 12 years, to purchase the land. Once a band's minimum reserve acreage is obtained any remaining money can be used for other band purposes.