

We are reasonable peoples. We have always been willing to share our lands and resources. We recognize that all peoples and all governments must work together for the benefit of all. This is why Inuit and other aboriginal peoples have entered into land claim negotiations.

[*English*]

We start from the premise that we are the rightful occupants and owners of the land. The government should be asking us for permission to occupy our lands and use our resources and should negotiate with us on that basis. Instead the government takes the position that it owns the land and it believes it is being generous by sharing some of our land with us.

[*Translation*]

The government has never even admitted that the Inuit have aboriginal title to Nunavut. The preamble of the Nunavut claim bill begins with the following statement:

- (1045)

[*English*]

Whereas the Inuit of the Nunavut settlement area have asserted an aboriginal title to that area based on their traditional and current use and occupation of the lands, waters and land-fast ice therein in accordance with their own customs and usages;

I want to say for the record that Inuit do not just assert title to Nunavut. Our title is real. It is the Government of Canada that has asserted title to Nunavut. Our title predates any claim by the government whether the government recognizes it or not.

[*Translation*]

The government would not be negotiating land settlements with us and with other aboriginal people if it did not believe we had aboriginal rights and title. I do not know why the government refuses to acknowledge this.

[*English*]

I also cannot discuss this land claims settlement without repeating my objection to the extinguishment clause. The clause appears in the Certainty Section of the claim agreement as clause 2.7.1:

Government Orders

In consideration of the rights and benefits provided to Inuit by the Agreement, Inuit hereby:

(a) cede, release and surrender to Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, all their aboriginal claims, rights, title and interests, if any, in and to lands and waters anywhere within Canada and adjacent offshore areas within the sovereignty or jurisdiction of Canada; and

(b) agree, on their behalf, and on behalf of their heirs, descendants and successors not to assert any cause of action, action for a declaration, claim or demand of whatever kind or nature which they ever had, now have or may hereafter have against Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada or any province, the government of any territory or any person based on any aboriginal claims, rights, title or interests in and to lands and waters described in Sub-section (a).

I repeat the words: "if any" from part (a).

This comprehensive extinguishment of rights was a government demand and condition for settlement. Inuit did not and do not want to extinguish their rights but this was the price the government asked us to pay.

[*Translation*]

The government made sure it exacted a heavy price for rights that it was not even sure we had. It did so in the name of certainty.

This land claim settlement is a good deal for the Government of Canada in another way. There is a perception that Inuit are getting the bulk of the land they claimed. That is not the case.

[*English*]

It is true that this is the largest land claim settlement in Canada but this is because the Northwest Territories represents about one-third of Canada and the area claimed by Inuit covers a large portion of it.

The Inuit claim encompasses two million square kilometres within the Northwest Territories. Under the land claims settlement, Inuit will have surface title to 350,000 square kilometres. Inuit will have subsurface title to about 36,000 square kilometres within the 350,000 square kilometres.

What this means is that the Government of Canada is getting title to about 82 per cent of the land claimed. Inuit are getting title to about 18 per cent of the total area claimed. If we look at the area to which Inuit are getting subsurface title, the percentage drops to about 2 per cent.