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Chair

Mr. Bruce Stanton

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•(1105)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC)): Welcome to the committee members and to our witnesses. This is the 36th meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Our agenda today deals with northern economic development.

This morning, we welcome Ms. Belinda Webb, Director of the Social, Cultural and Economic Development Department and Mr. Gordon Miles, Coordinator of the National Economic Development Committee for Inuit Nunangat.

[English]

Members will see that we have only one organization with us today. It's a very important voice for the Inuit of Canada, and very important to our study considering the obstacles and barriers to development in our north, for and on behalf of northerners.

Ms. Webb, we'll begin with you and then go directly to members' questions. You have the floor for 10 minutes. If you need a little more time today, that's fine.

Please proceed. Welcome.

Ms. Belinda Webb (Director, Social, Cultural and Economic Development Department, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami): Thank you very much.

Thank you for the opportunity to sit and talk with you today in regard to economic development, specifically with Inuit. As mentioned, my name is Belinda Webb and I'm the director for the social, cultural and economic development department within Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. ITK is the national Inuit organization, and we represent the four Inuit land claims in Canada. These are Nunatsiavut, which is the region I'm from, which is northern Labrador; Nunavik, which is northern Quebec; Nunavut; and Inuvialuit, which is part of the Northwest Territories.

For my presentation I will discuss five needs and suggest some solutions in regard to economic development for Inuit Nunangat. Just to give you a highlight, those five particular needs are the need to treat Inuit Nunangat as one region; the need to recognize the realities in Inuit Nunangat; the need for flexibility; the need to implement the land claims; and the need to develop collaborative management policies and procedures.

First, there is the need to treat Inuit Nunangat as one region. As previously mentioned, it's the four Inuit land claim regions of Canada that we represent. The process of political development in

Canada has had the effect of establishing jurisdictional barriers that have historically been at odds with the political and economic development objectives of Inuit Nunangat. This is most clearly seen in the federal government's arbitrary policy of making distinctions between the regions that are north of 60, which would include two of our regions, Inuvialuit and Nunavut, and those south of 60, which would include Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.

I'm aware that in your current mandate for your study you're just studying the three territories, so I'd highly suggest that you also incorporate the other two Inuit regions that we have that aren't within your current mandate for your study, which as previously mentioned are Nunavik and Nunatsiavut. The reason is that the reality is that all of the regions within Inuit Nunangat share the Arctic environment as well as a common heritage, culture, and language. The settlement of comprehensive land claims agreements throughout Inuit Nunangat means that they all share a similar legal and regulatory framework. Inuit Nunangat claimant groups have developed effective mechanisms, both through their agreements and in terms of program delivery, to establish effective partnership agreements with their respective provincial and territorial governments and counterparts.

So a federal framework that treated Inuit Nunangat as one region from a policy perspective would demonstrate an understanding of these underlying realities and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of federal community economic development program delivery.

The second need is to recognize the realities of Inuit Nunangat. One of the greatest barriers Inuit face is a lack of understanding of the total environment within which Inuit are trying to promote business and economic development. Programs that don't fit or people who don't understand the realities of the north are two of the major obstacles that Inuit deal with on a daily basis.

Significant time and effort have been spent over the past several decades to explain, educate, and enlighten people about the realities in Inuit Nunangat. Inuit share a common heritage, a long history of living in the Arctic, but a very short history of participation in a typically southern style of economy. Across Inuit Nunangat there is an immature Inuit business economy and a large infrastructure deficit when compared to the rest of Canada.

Another barrier to economic development in the Arctic is the lack of understanding of the cost of doing business in Inuit Nunangat and the impact of these costs on economic development. In addition to the increased costs, the purchasing power is diminished, the need for client equity is increased, markets are extremely limited, and opportunities, especially as defined in a southern context, are few.

Third is the need for flexibility. Government support for economic development in Inuit Nunangat must be based on sound principles but must also include the flexibility required to allow it to respond to the different governance styles in place. It must also recognize that each of the comprehensive land claims agreements are somewhat different and that arrangements and planning practices already exist between claimant organizations and the respective provincial and territorial governments.

Programs must be timely and must respond to the timelines imposed by sealift or ice road requirements. High costs and the lack of infrastructure require an increased level of cooperation between all levels of government, the private sector, Inuit institutions, and other partners that are identified.

All parties must work to remove unnecessary restrictions, to make accommodations for others, and to seek to streamline the process to maximize the return for the communities. Opportunities must be defined within the context of remote Arctic communities. They cannot match the definition used in southern Canada.

The fourth need is to implement land claims agreements. The Indian Act does not apply to Inuit Nunangat. The five comprehensive land claims agreements provide the principles on which the federal government must deal with Inuit land claims organizations. Each of the comprehensive land claims agreements is unique, and the responsibility for implementation varies from agreement to agreement. But in every agreement, the negotiators have clearly understood the necessity and importance of clearly identifying the role of the federal government in the process.

Unfortunately, the record on claims implementation has not been acceptable to the Inuit organizations. The Nunatsiavut agreement is still new, and we hope their experience is a more positive one. That said, the comprehensive land claim agreement holders continue to work at improving the understanding of the reality of Inuit Nunangat while hoping that this will lead to implementation as outlined in their agreements.

Fifth is the need for collaborative management. All key areas of responsibility within Inuit Nunangat agreements, such as wildlife management, land use planning, environmental assessment, and project review regimes, are based on principles of co-management. The spirit and intent of these agreements should also be reflected in the development of policies and programs and arrangements directed towards addressing community economic development needs throughout Inuit Nunangat.

The establishment of the National Economic Development Committee for Inuit Nunangat, with Inuit, Inuvialuit, and government representatives as full members, represents an opportunity to move forward in a collaborative manner to develop practical strategies for addressing current and future economic development needs and priorities.

In 2006, the Inuit community economic development organizations, or CEDOs, from the four Inuit regions met to discuss common problems. They agreed to work towards a committee made up of the Inuit, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada headquarter personnel, and INAC regional office personnel.

In 2008, an MOU was signed between the INAC deputy minister and Inuit leaders that led, as mentioned, to the formation of the National Economic Development Committee for Inuit Nunangat. The establishment of NEDCIN for Inuit Nunangat, with Inuit, Inuvialuit, and government representatives as full members, represents an opportunity to move forward in a collaborative manner.

● (1110)

The first meeting of NEDCIN was held in April, and a work plan was approved that identified a number of priorities. The areas I have listed above were all included in this particular work plan. The Inuit members of the NEDCIN prepared an Inuit response to the proposed federal framework on aboriginal economic development. When the Regional Economic Development Agency, also known as CanNor, was announced, the Inuit members of NEDCIN prepared an Inuit position on the agency and how it might be structured to meet our common challenges.

In addition to those documents, other draft documents have been prepared on the following items: the cost of doing business in Inuit Nunangat, the discussion paper on collaborative management, the Inuit need for multi-year funding agreements, economic development implications of the comprehensive land claim agreements, what community economic development means in Inuit Nunangat, and urban Inuit access to economic development support and funding.

These papers and a number of others in the works are designed to explain, educate, and provide a road map to guide all the partners in Inuit Nunangat over, around, through, or under the barriers facing Inuit. Collaborative management is one of the best ways to identify and respond to the unique set of circumstances found in Inuit Nunangat. Inuit have survived for thousands of years in an Arctic environment by working together to solve common challenges. NEDCIN provides a new vehicle to build on that process. When you're looking at economic development specifically through the Inuit perspective, you need to regard all our land claim agreements, including Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut, and Inuvialuit.

As previously mentioned, with me today is Gordon Miles, who is the coordinator of the NEDCIN committee.

● (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Webb.

I'll first apologize. While I was quick in my rather broken French to introduce you and your positions, I neglected to say what organization you were from. Please accept my apologies.

I thank you both very much for attending.

We'll go directly to questions from members, and we'll begin with Mr. Russell for seven minutes.

Witnesses, the way we do this is we have seven minutes for questions and responses. The more succinct you can keep your responses and, members, your questions, the more material we can get through. We appreciate your indulgence in that respect.

Mr. Russell, for seven minutes.

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning to each of you.

Belinda, it's good to see you. Of course I know Belinda's family from down in Maine, and she has many relatives in Labrador. It's good to see you. Hopefully all your folks are doing well and I'll get a chance to visit them in the not-too-distant future.

Good morning as well to Mr. Miles.

First of all, I'll offer a note of congratulations on November 7 as International Inuit Day, a celebration of the Inuit throughout the Arctic, in Russia, Greenland, Alaska, and Canada. I believe it was proclaimed back in 2007. It certainly highlights the great contribution of Inuit throughout Canada, and of course I know that first-hand in Labrador.

I wanted to focus on a couple of items. You talked about the need for collaborative arrangements for working together. In essence, the land claims often define these arrangements through co-management boards and other types of mechanisms. This is so fundamental from a process perspective and from an outcomes perspective.

The federal government released two major pieces of their policy. One is the federal framework for aboriginal economic development and the other is the northern strategy. What type of involvement have ITK had in terms of the development of those policies? Are they reflective of the values, concerns, and interests of ITK? Are they of any use to Inuit throughout the region? I want to know, through that prism, if there has been a collaborative effort in the development of the framework, which is specifically on aboriginal economic development, and the northern strategy, which has elements of social and economic development.

My other question stems from a comment that was made by Belinda about recognizing the realities. I don't believe anybody around the table would quarrel with the fact that there is a tremendous need for investments in infrastructure, whether that be housing or more public types of infrastructure such as docks, for instance, for shipping, as well as social infrastructure such as schools and education. Do you think the investments to date are going to address the issues around housing and education? How do you see the lack of physical and social infrastructure as a barrier to economic development?

Those are my two questions. One is on the collaborative nature of it, and the other is on infrastructure.

• (1120)

Mr. Gordon Miles (Coordinator, National Economic Development Committee for Inuit Nunangat, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami): Thank you very much.

Mr. Russell, those are very good questions.

Starting with the co-management, the Inuit members—or the Inuit caucus, if you will—of NEDCIN prepared a paper that identified about 11 to 12 Inuit needs that should play a role in a new federal framework for AED. That paper was presented last January, it was discussed, and when the federal framework was released, the principles in that paper reflected the Inuit position for the most part.

We were pleased with that, but there is a next step, and that is the program redesign that will take place over the next year. NEDCIN is a joint committee. It's Inuit, but it also includes the INAC headquarters people as well as the INAC regional people, and with the advent of CanNor, we hope to include CanNor in that process.

As you mentioned, co-management is included in all of the land claims. In the land claims it's mentioned, and there are specifically sections on wildlife and resource management. Economic development is not part of that generally, so what NEDCIN has said—and Inuit members of NEDCIN—is that we need to ensure that the same principle is adopted as we move forward. NEDCIN itself is based on the principles of getting together, identifying the challenges, and then working to come up with solutions that satisfy all the parties.

On the northern strategy that was released—and Belinda may want to address that more, because it doesn't deal specifically with economic development—NEDCIN's point of view was that, again, in principle it was good. We wanted to ensure that all the four Inuit regions were included in that northern strategy, and that was not there in the initial documentation. Subsequently it was included.

One of the first needs Belinda mentioned in her presentation was the need to treat Inuit Nunangat as one region. And why is that important? It's important because in all of Canada there are about 55,000 Inuit or Inuvialuit, and they share the common history, the heritage, the language, and the Arctic environment. Many of the problems they face are across all four regions, and they're all very much different from those of southern Canada and non-remote communities. There are very few roads in Inuit Nunangat, and most communities are fly-in or perhaps accessible by water in the summer months or by ice road in the winter.

On the second question, on recognizing the realities and the infrastructure deficit, one of the needs the Inuit brought forward is the need to have a good understanding of the socio-economic impacts of infrastructures and the infrastructure deficit. You mentioned the housing initiative, and that's very important. That has been handled in different ways between the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, but in each case the deficit is being addressed.

Is there enough money? No. The reality is that there's a huge need for more infrastructure. From a nation-building point of view, there are costs that have to be identified beyond what is realistic on a per capita basis. In the north, we talk about sovereignty and we talk about the fact that the Inuit have been there for thousands of years. They need the infrastructure that southern Canada has come to expect as normal.

•(1125)

Mr. Todd Russell: Okay.

The Chair: We'll have to call it at that. They were good questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Lemay, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): MPs receive all kinds of documents, and they read them too, which is in itself a good thing. I received a document called *Building Inuit Nunaat—The Inuit Action Plan*. I received it in English only. It was dated February 5, 2007.

Has it been translated?

[English]

Ms. Belinda Webb: No, it hasn't been.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Was it sent to everyone or just to some MPs? Who did it go to?

[English]

Ms. Belinda Webb: I'm not 100% sure, as it's not a document that we sent out prior to this particular meeting. We haven't sent out any documentation.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I know that you did not send us the document; your president, Mary Simon, sent it to us on September 2, 2009. Let me read you the letter that came with it. Do not assume that MPs do not read; you would be surprised. I am going to give you a free translation: this document was prepared in collaboration with several organizations. Our intent is to provide development for the future.

Has this document been officially submitted to the federal government? If it has, is anyone using it as a reason to send us lots of documents on northern development?

You can tell Ms. Simon that the document is very well done. It describes the needs in detail. Apart from MPs, has anyone else in the federal government received it?

[English]

Mr. Gordon Miles: I don't know, but I will make this comment.

I know that INAC officials have received it and I know that when we were preparing the MOU and the Inuit position on the federal framework for aboriginal economic development, the Inuit action plan provided the road map. It is a broader plan, if you will. NEDCIN wants to look at economic development for the most part from a community economic development perspective. The Inuit action plan is a much broader document that encompasses everything from health and education to economic development, the full range of the government products and services.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Miles, you are right to the extent that it seems to me to be essential for each MP to have a copy of the document before going to Iqaluit, to Nunavut. I am going to go to Nunavut, but I cannot go to Yellowknife.

Could you send it to us? I understand that it will be difficult to get it translated, but the document contains so much information and is so well done that it seems to me to be essential for MPs to have a copy before they go to Nunavut.

Ms. Hurley, do you have a copy of it?

•(1130)

Ms. Mary Hurley (Committee Researcher): I do not have that document at the moment.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Is it available somewhere in the government?

Ms. Mary Hurley: It is on-line.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Is it in both languages?

Ms. Mary Hurley: No.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Is it possible to have it translated?

Thank you very much. We can send the bill to Mr. Strahl. You can tell him so.

I would like to know what stage your relations with Nunavut are at. You mentioned four organizations. It is really well integrated. Is there an agreement between those four organizations to develop the north together?

I do not want this to come as a surprise to you. I know the answer to this; I am a lawyer. In Appendix IV of the document, a "Partnership Accord" between all those good people is mentioned. It was signed on May 31, 2005.

Are all the parties implementing this accord? Is the federal government aware of it?

[English]

Ms. Belinda Webb: From my understanding—I can also do a follow-up within the organization—when that particular agreement was signed.... The way Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami works is that our board of directors consists of the presidents of the four land claim agreements. At all of our meetings, those presidents are present, and any economic development items or areas of concern are often discussed at that table.

With regard to implementation of the actual agreement, we have been working with the Inuit Relations Secretariat on trying to improve some of the items that are in that particular agreement.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: We have to avoid a duplication of effort.

The Chair: Mr. Lemay, your time is up.

Mr. Marc Lemay: I will come back to this.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

We'll carry on with Mr. Duncan from the Conservative Party.

Mr. Duncan, you have seven minutes.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Thank you very much.

Good morning to you both.

The Inuit action plan has generated some comment this morning. I want to move toward discussion on education.

The action plan talked about trying to address some gaps in the education system for Inuit. Can you explain what those gaps are, particularly in Inuvialuit and in Nunavut, and also how the federal government might best address them? That would be my first question.

Also, could you give us an idea on connectivity and access to broadband? I think this is a really significant area, which makes a difference in education and in almost every other sphere of activity. It's not just social; it's also economic in every way.

If you could focus on those two areas, we'll see how the time goes.

• (1135)

Ms. Belinda Webb: I'll touch on the first one, and I'll pass the second one over to Gordon.

Currently, ITK is working with provinces and territories on education strategy. Recently there was an education accord signed between ITK and federal, provincial, and territorial governments. With the signing of that particular accord, this particular working group has one year to put together a national Inuit education strategy. They held their first meeting on that strategy last month, and they're moving forward on that.

On the ITK website, there is documentation that was done prior to a summit on education held in Inuvik. Those documents are available, and they clearly define what some of the gaps are in regard to Inuit education. Just to highlight a couple of basic gaps in education, one would certainly be being educated in one's mother tongue, in one's mother language. Across Inuit Nunangat we have numerous Inuit language dialects. To have children understanding and learning in their own language is a priority. That's one of the main areas.

As well, the education system as it is currently is a southern-based education system. For instance, in biology you might be learning about giraffes or frogs or something like that. To an Inuit person living in the north, not only do you have to explain the giraffe and the biology of it, you actually have to explain what a giraffe is and where it comes from. Having a southern-based education system in the north for Inuit who have not seen some of these realities is one of the other areas this particular committee is working on.

If you're interested in the developments of that working group, we can certainly keep you informed as to where they're headed.

Mr. Gordon Miles: I will add a couple of comments before I get to connectivity.

Education is hugely important and plays a major role, particularly in skills and employment training. There are seven community economic development organizations, CEDOs, and they are all AHRDA holders. They deliver the HRSDC programs within their regions, and that's one way—again I go back to co-management—of working together. The CEDOs, as AHRDA holders, are also

delivering to communities the aboriginal economic development programs. So it becomes one window, and you can integrate between projects.

As an example, there is a mining trades skills strategy group operating within Nunavut that includes the mining companies, Government of Nunavut representatives, and the Inuit AHRDAs. Working together, they're trying to identify what the needs will be, and then they will put in place training programs to address them. From NEDCIN's point of view, that's more of what we need. It's taking the available resources and making sure we're not duplicating but are building on the institutions that are actually on the ground in Inuit Nunangat and ensuring that they can provide the best possible solutions for the people.

On connectivity, I think it varies across the four regions. I believe that Nunavut, for sure, has broadband within every community. I believe that Inuvialuit and Nunavik have it. I'm not sure about Nunatsiavut and where they stand. In all cases, the bandwidth is not sufficient to address the needs. As a result, for programs that could be quite helpful, whether it be distance education or interactive video, there is not enough bandwidth in most cases to allow those to happen. As we move forward, it will become increasingly important to address that deficit and ensure that the Inuit in the Arctic have access to the same broadband end speed that's available everywhere else in Canada.

• (1140)

Mr. John Duncan: Thank you. That is quite comprehensive.

Has the ITK made a submission to the Dawson exercise that's looking at devolution in Nunavut, and if so, what was the main thrust of your submission?

The Chair: Just give a brief response, if possible. We're a little over time there, I'm sorry.

Ms. Belinda Webb: That's no problem. It will be brief.

To my knowledge, we haven't provided any type of submission to that particular exercise.

The Chair: That's pretty brief. Thanks very much. That is in compliance, yes.

Let's go now to Mr. Bagnell, who will be followed by Mr. Dreeshen. We are on five-minute rounds at this point.

Mr. Bagnell, please proceed.

[Translation]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thank you both for coming. It's very helpful and very important for our study, obviously.

When you talk about the four regions, of course, I get your point. The present reality is that they are dealt with separately, as you know, which is why you made that point. I am curious, under the present circumstances, if you feel that Nunavik and Nunatsiavut perhaps get less favourable treatment. That is not on purpose, but it is sort of more forgotten that the territories are well treated historically by the federal government, and being in the northern parts of provinces, they may be a bit more forgotten and not get the same level of benefits and services.

Do you think that's the same, or are they roughly all at the same level in being served by government?

Mr. Gordon Miles: It varies, depending on what the land claims state, the obligations of the land claims, and the relationship and the agreements that are in place with the provincial governments within Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. For instance, I mentioned that the CEDOs are AHRDA holders. In Quebec, the Province of Quebec has signed an agreement with Nunavik, and the CEDO in Nunavik is actually the Kativik Regional Government, so they signed an agreement whereby the federal funds for HRSDC, along with the provincial contributions, are all funnelled through the CEDO, so they actually have a one-window approach on that. They have a much better arrangement, because in Quebec they have the child care support that is the envy of the other three regions.

Having said that, in some of the aboriginal programming they are limited to a one-year agreement. In Nunavut, for example, we had a five-year renewable arrangement for core funding. In Quebec they are only allowed to do that on a one-year basis. In the Northwest Territories it's on a one-year basis.

So there are different problems across the four regions. I wouldn't say any of them are better treated. It comes as a result of the governance structures that are in place and the length of time since the land claims were settled and how much progress has been made on implementation.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: As you mentioned, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is primarily Indian, but we did put in the small Inuit section recently. Is that sufficient? Is it effective? My guess is that it's small and not big enough.

Mr. Gordon Miles: Are you referring to the Inuit Relations Secretariat? That has been a help. More needs to be done. I believe that the understanding and the purpose of NEDCIN was to bring together.... I will try to keep it brief. NEDCIN is a huge committee. There are 19 members. It's made up of the four Inuit leaders, five CEDO chief executive officers, the four regional directors from the INAC regions, two headquarters personnel, the assistant deputy minister and the director general of policy and strategy—I hope I have these titles right—and ex officio is the president of ITK, the president of Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association of Canada, and the executive director of the secretariat. It brings together the regional people, the Inuit organizations, and the Inuit CEDOs to work on common problems, to find those barriers you people are looking for, and to find a way to get a solution.

• (1145)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Roughly how many people do you have on staff in Ottawa and in other areas?

Mr. Gordon Miles: Is that for NEDCIN?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: No, for the ITK.

Ms. Belinda Webb: Currently we have approximately 44 staff in the Ottawa region and that's made up of the department of health and environment, my department, the finance department, the communications department, and then executive services. We are stationed in Ottawa. We do not have staff in the regions. However, we deal with a lot of committees for specific files. Within those committees we have representatives from each of the four land claim regions. Normally they're under the land claim organization. That's how we are connected with our regions. As well, our board of directors, as previously mentioned, is made up of the presidents of those land claim organizations. ITK is basically in Ottawa with 44 staff.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bagnell.

We'll now go to Mr. Dreesen for five minutes. He will be followed by Monsieur Lemay.

Mr. Earl Dreesen (Red Deer, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses very much for being here today.

I want to touch on some of the things that at least I see from the National Committee on Inuit Education. I understand the national committee is made up of representatives from ITK, its member organizations, the federal government partners, and government in the four Inuit regions. They were tasked with developing a strategy on Inuit education, with the objective of improving access and obviously improving the outcomes for the Inuit.

Is that a start of this collaboration in trying to pull the four regions together? Do you see that as a model that might work in other areas as well?

Ms. Belinda Webb: In this regard, where it is specific to education, we happen to deal with the provincial-territorial counterparts. It's in the early stages, as previously mentioned. They've just had one particular meeting so far, but in observing that particular meeting, I think it's a great approach when you're looking at collaborative management, because in numerous cases you have to deal with the territorial, provincial, federal, as well as the land claim organizations. So I think it could be a good model, but it's one we'll have to watch to see how it develops and what outcomes come out of that particular working group.

In addition to that particular working group, as Gordon mentioned, I sit on the NEDCIN committee. I think that's also another best practice model in regards to co-management. As of right now, it's working quite well.

There are other co-management groups, for instance with the Nunatsiavut and Nunavik. They have a co-management board for their parks, and I understand that's working very well also.

I think there are a few out there that we can certainly use as a best practice to see how it's working or not working, but yes, the education working group seems to be very well....

Mr. Earl Dreesen: That's good.

I'm a former educator. I taught school for 34 years and so I have some experience with some of the difficulties that exist in those areas.

One of the questions I have is this. Quebec and Labrador are in your region. Are there more difficulties when you have to deal with provincial governments and their expectations versus what there would be in the other territories?

• (1150)

Ms. Belinda Webb: I don't have a lot of background in that particular area, but I can certainly look further into that question for you and get back to you on that specifically.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: The other question I have is on the University of the Arctic. I was trying to take a look at what that is. It's a virtual university, and of course, when you look at where the communities are located, it's extremely important that you do have this broadband capability and so on.

If this is for the circumpolar countries, I'm curious as to how you deal with this and what the thoughts are as far as common language goes. You spoke about the different dialects that there would be. Are there any insights that you can give us in that regard?

Ms. Belinda Webb: That's another area that I don't work specifically on. I could follow up on that as well. Within our particular department, we do have a national Inuit language committee. One of the items on their work plan is looking at groups like the Maori and how they've managed to sustain their language.

I know that particular group has been looking at the different dialects across the four regions and how we can start incorporating things to have perhaps one main dialect or written process so we can ensure the language stays alive.

With regard to the Arctic university, I can certainly follow up on that question as well.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

[Translation]

Mr. Lemay, you have five minutes.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Then Mr. Bevington gets the floor.

The Chair: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Marc Lemay: It is funny, because the answers to all the questions that my colleagues opposite have asked can be found in this document. I am a little surprised.

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Not all MPs read.

Mr. Marc Lemay: One question occurs to me. It is as if you are off playing by yourselves, if you will excuse the expression. You are working in one area and the northern plan is working in another. Everything is there!

[English]

Social and Economic Development Issues Next Steps

the bilateral development of a social and economic development priorities to the Action Plan (2006-2009) by March 31, 2007, which may provide strategies and approaches to the following;

[Translation]

Has the plan been implemented. Is it still on some shelf somewhere, in Mr. Strahl's department? Can we help you to get it going? Everything is there. The answers to the questions you have been asked are there. The document is dated 2007. Has anything been done about it? Are people in Ottawa asleep?

Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Gordon Miles: From NEDCIN's point of view...NEDCIN came after the Inuit action plan. It's based upon the recommendations of the Inuit action plan, and it's focused particularly on community economic development. As such, we feel it is moving along the plan as it's outlined. Are we at the end? No, but we've made progress.

We have the MOU. We have the participation and the support of regional as well as national INAC personnel, along with the Inuit land claim organizations and their CEDOs. It's bringing together these parties to work together.

We talk about collaborative management. The purpose of collaborative management is to move the decision-making as close as possible to the communities, the end-users, because that way the decisions are the ones that in most cases will be both needed and wanted.

You asked if it has been implemented. We feel we're part of that implementation. Is it complete? Certainly not. But from the CED perspective, we think we're moving in the right direction.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: What is your greatest difficulty? Is there one that stands out above all the others when it comes to implementation? What is the greatest obstacle you have to face in implementing this plan?

[English]

Mr. Gordon Miles: I would say the major obstacle is the need to explain and educate about the reality of the north. When we talk about the cost of doing business in the north, we talk about the high cost of transportation. Those are just words. It's much more difficult to explain the impacts of those costs, the impacts of the lack of housing. What does it mean in the overall development plan?

You have many programs, territorial, provincial, and federal, that are trying to address these problems, but sometimes they work at cross purposes. Sometimes they work in isolation from the others. The Inuit and NEDCIN's perspective is to bring it together as much as possible, to maximize the contributions and outcomes to make it what's needed for the communities.

To go back to your question, the major obstacle is the lack of understanding and explaining to people.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemay.

At this point, members, because there has been considerable discussion about the action plan, I would first draw your attention to a page in the briefing package that you received from our analysts [Translation]

—on page five. I do not know the page number in the French version.

[English]

On page 5 there is a reference to this report, which is an action plan. It would appear to be a joint report from the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Inuit Circumpolar Council. This report arose out of a 2005 agreement between ITK and INAC, which compelled this action plan.

It is likely, members, that this report was circulated to you. I would ask that you check with your office to see if you have a copy, but the reference is also given to you in the briefing package, and there's a website that you can find it on.

[Translation]

Mr. Lemay, do you have a question?

Mr. Marc Lemay: I really do not want to sound like a broken record, but could each MP receive a copy, even though it is in English? We can see if we need it translated.

[English]

The Chair: Of course.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: It is important for those who are going to Nunavut to be familiar with this document.

[English]

The Chair: I would certainly agree with that.

I have one final point on the reason the document wasn't circulated to all members. You all know, of course, that we must circulate documents in both official languages, so that's why we didn't have it in front of us here today.

There being no further questions on that, hopefully, we'll continue with Monsieur Duncan.

[Translation]

Mr. Duncan, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Mr. John Duncan: Actually, I don't have a question. I just wanted to explain that the action plan was actually submitted to the previous INAC minister, Mr. Prentice. There was correspondence from Minister Prentice back to ITK asking for some more specifics, and there's more recent correspondence as well, so this is ongoing. What Mr. Lemay is saying is perfectly accurate. I think it's good for all members to take an interest and read the plan. That's all I wanted to say.

• (1200)

The Chair: We have a slot here for questions as well.

Mr. John Duncan: No, that's fine.

The Chair: Let's go to Mr. Bevington, then.

Mr. Bevington, you weren't here for the first round, so we'll give you seven minutes. We'll start you off in quasi-first round, but it's the second round. You know what I mean.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize to the witnesses. I got tied up at Rideau Hall with an investiture for one of my constituents. You understand the importance of recognizing northern heroes. You know that with our limited population, when we do get recognition at a national level, it's very important to honour it.

My concern and probably my expertise in northern issues have always been around energy. Last summer we saw the rising oil prices, and we all knew what that meant to northern territories—especially Nunavut, which is so reliant on fossil fuel energy sources and probably requires more per capita than anywhere else in the country.

Can you describe to me the direction Nunavut wants to take to ease that burden, and how the federal government could be assisting to a greater extent in ensuring that Nunavut has a future energy use that is more sustainable, more affordable, and more locally produced?

Mr. Gordon Miles: I'm not sure what Nunavut's strategy is. I can speak to some of the thoughts of the Inuit organizations. The Qulliq Energy Corporation is the agency within Nunavut that handles power, and they're looking at a hydro project within or near Iqaluit to try to provide some renewable resource generation. I'm sure they're also looking at some of the other technologies that are out there.

One of the problems they are encountering is the capital requirements that are placed upon the crown corporations. They cannot go over a certain limit. I forget the amount, but I think the hydro installation was \$500 million or somewhere in that area. They couldn't borrow that much money because of the federal guidelines. I think that needs to be addressed, because based on the oil prices a year ago—and granted that they've dropped significantly since then—there was a four-year payback on the investment in this hydro.

That's one option. Are there are other options? I'm sure there are. From an Inuit perspective, the concern we have is how to ensure that Inuit organizations participate in those projects and reap the benefits so that it's not entirely a fly-in contract where people come from the south, do an installation, and turn around and leave. The lower cost would be a benefit, but what the Inuit are looking for is the ability to participate within those projects to train Inuit workers, to take the jobs both in construction and in the operation. Nunavut, and Qulliq Energy in particular, has an apprenticeship program. There was an announcement made last week about the number of apprentices who had, I believe, reached their journeyman status.

Major projects are the vehicle by which most of the training is going to take place, whether it's mining or major power projects or housing. In Nunavut, the Nunavut Housing Trust was set up in such a way that they are actually... The cost per home has been increased because they are providing journeymen apprenticeship training, leading to journeymen in every community where they are building homes. So the timeframe for the construction is extended, the costs have gone up, but in the end they're going to have housing plus journeymen on site for other projects.

It's a balancing act, but it's a matter of working together to ensure that, moving forward, there are skilled tradespeople there for the position.

• (1205)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Your observation on the borrowing ability of the Nunavut government is mirrored in the Northwest Territories, where the Northwest Territories government under the NWT Act can only borrow \$500 million, I think, for total borrowing. All these projects that come under the crown corporations fit in that envelope of the \$500 million. If you're running a government that is responsible for the vast areas that you're responsible for in Nunavut—1.7 million square kilometres—and for the kinds of infrastructure requirements, this constraint is something that is actually really impeding progress, I know, in the Northwest Territories. I'm sure that's the same in Nunavut. Your observation there, I think, is very useful to understanding where the problems lie in moving ahead in these territories.

If you say that you have a project that had a four-year return, even if it were for a utility project we can look at 25- to 30-year returns as being acceptable and useful. Probably within that context this is a very attractive project, yet you can't proceed with it because you don't have the capacity within the system to make it work. The federal government has a role here, I'm sure.

The Chair: We're really at the end of our time, but did you want to add a comment to Mr. Bevington's last commentary?

Mr. Gordon Miles: I could go on forever, so I probably shouldn't, other than to thank you for the opportunity.

I think I mentioned earlier that one of the main priorities of NEDCIN is to educate people on what things mean. That includes the Inuit in the communities, but it also includes the business community and governments—provincial, territorial, and federal. Mr. Bevington raised a very good point. I think the federal government has a responsibility to look at these spending limits and identify why they're there and the impacts. I don't pretend to understand why those limits are there, but I do know that it's hampering the ability to make a move that would be in the best interests of Nunavut. As a result, the parties should come together and say what has to be done and who has to do it to make these changes.

The Chair: Okay, we'll leave it at that.

Now we'll go to Mr. Martin for five minutes.

Mr. John Duncan: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: There's a point of order from Mr. Duncan.

Mr. John Duncan: I think it's important. You asked a question, a good question, on a public utility. I thought the response back was about a forty-year return. Was it four or forty?

Mr. Gordon Miles: It was four years based on the \$200—

Mr. John Duncan: I just wanted to clarify that number, because I thought I heard forty and then I heard four. I wanted to make sure you were both speaking of the same thing.

The Chair: That really wasn't a point of order.

Mr. John Duncan: A point of clarification, but I have a point—

Some hon. members: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. John Duncan: Okay. Seeing as how it's our slot, and we can voluntarily not give it up, I thought it was appropriate to interject.

The Chair: Well, if you have a point of order... I did recognize Mr. Martin, so I could certainly open up another slot here after Mr. Martin, but do you have a point of order to make?

Mr. John Duncan: I do. Once again, the tables have been moved in this direction in this room, so that we're tripping over each other over here and you guys have a wide corridor over there. It keeps happening.

• (1210)

The Chair: Okay, we'll take that concern under advisement and we'll communicate with the maintenance staff about that issue. Thank you, Mr. Duncan.

Now let's go over to Mr. Martin for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Member of Panel of Chairs, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, both Ms. Webb and Mr. Miles, for being here.

I have a couple of things. One is that there's a head start early learning program and I wonder if those programs are being used in the north. They're very effective in reducing an array of socio-economic problems.

The second one is just for your information. Money was received by the roots and shoots program. That was Jane Goodall's program for children. It is a program you might want to look at starting to implement, because it gets kids out and active in the communities. They build their own environmental programs, often, and it might be of interest. I can share that context with you afterwards, if you'd like.

My first question to you is this. What is the high school graduation rate for kids within the four land claims areas, looking at it as one, and what percentage of kids actually acquire post-secondary education?

The second question I have is what percentage of your employees are Inuit.

Thank you.

Ms. Belinda Webb: I'll just touch base, and I'll leave it open to Gordon to add on as well.

In regard to the head start early childhood programs, they are in the north. One of the problems we tend to have in the north is the wait list in a lot of the regions. For instance, in my home town of Nain, Nunatsiavut, I have relatives who have young children, and they want to get them into the day care centre, and they're 45th on a waiting list. So the programs are there, but the capacity isn't. Then, of course, because that capacity is so limited, oftentimes the parent can't go back to work because there are no other babysitters or what have you within the community to take children in.

As for high school graduation, our numbers are still fairly low, but we do have graduates. I can get the specific data on that as well. I don't have it in front of me.

Hon. Keith Martin: Do you have a rough estimate at all, Ms. Webb, a ballpark figure?

Mr. Gordon Miles: This is anecdotal, and I haven't seen any studies on it, but in Nunavut the high school dropout rate is generally accepted to be about 75%.

Hon. Keith Martin: It's a 75% dropout rate, so there's a 25% success rate for getting through high school.

In terms of those acquiring post-secondary education, what is the percentage?

Mr. Gordon Miles: I don't have a percentage. It's low. I think there are a couple of reasons.

One is that the Inuit are not eligible for the post-secondary funding that's available to some first nations. HRSDC provides training funding; the instructions that were handed down to the AHRDAs were that since post-secondary education generally doesn't lead to jobs until the fourth year, they will fund the fourth year, but they are hesitant to fund the first three years, which means—

Hon. Keith Martin: I'm sorry, but I'm failing to understand this.

Mr. Gordon Miles: Well, neither do we.

Hon. Keith Martin: I'm sorry to interrupt you, but we know your points about economic development are crucial. For the collective benefit of the committee when you go away, if you'd provide to this committee your problems and your solutions in terms of enabling kids to acquire these skill sets, it would be very valuable.

Thank you.

Mr. Gordon Miles: I think there should also be a change in the AHRDA guidelines, because there is a huge need. Anyone who does evaluations in the north repeatedly identifies that there's a need for Inuit with post-secondary education, skills, and training, yet the access to funding to allow them to go to those institutions is not there.

The Nunavut government has financial assistance for Nunavut students. That is generally not enough to cover the full costs of student tuition, accommodations, and travel. What has happened within Nunavut is that the AHRDA holders, the CEDOs, work with the Government of Nunavut to supplement the available funds that the Government of Nunavut has so that a student can actually receive enough money to attend either a training course or a diploma or certificate program. The minute you get into universities, you run into some significant problems, both from a cost point of view and from an eligibility point of view.

●(1215)

Hon. Keith Martin: It seems as if the kids are almost set up for failure, and—

The Chair: We're really out of time, Mr. Martin; I'm sorry. We're over time.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to take one of the government spots to do a couple of administrative things. Then I'll ask a couple of questions, if I can get through that in the time allowed.

In your opening comments, Ms. Webb, you made reference to a couple of different items. I wonder if it would be possible for us to receive these documents for the benefit of the committee. The first you referred to was an MOU signed by INAC and Inuit leaders in 2008, which led to the formation of NEDCIN. Second, you mentioned a work plan that NEDCIN had done up. It would be very helpful if we could get a copy of that as well. Third, you referred to a position that you took in respect to working with CanNor and to that relationship. You mentioned, for example, a position on how ITK might work with the agency. Finally, quite a number of draft documents were mentioned at the end of your presentation. I accept, of course, that they are in draft form, but if they could be available for our consideration, it would be extremely helpful.

I'll go now to my questions.

First, several times you made reference in a roundabout way to the fact that things are done a certain way in southern Canada, and that when we export that approach to the north, it becomes problematic. I think there was a reference to the education program and I think there were others. Do you have some thoughts on how that cultural difference would be best addressed? What would you recommend to begin to address that problem and make sure the programs or initiatives, when they are implemented in the north, could at least consider that issue?

Ms. Belinda Webb: Maybe I'll start, and I'll leave it to Gordon to add on.

The main recommendation coming out of ITK would be to have consultation with Inuit land claims organizations and Inuit communities.

Every year, ITK does what has in the past been called the Arctic tour. I think the name is actually changing. We invite individuals within the federal system to come to one of the regions with us. We actually take the federal representatives to some of the houses, the school, the nursing station, and what have you. It's completely organized by ITK. We go to one of the regions. It provides an opportunity for individuals working within the federal system to be on the ground and see what it's like to actually live in the north and hear from community members what their experiences are and what their problems are.

I would say that consultation with ITK as well as with the regions would be helpful in that regard.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Miles.

Mr. Gordon Miles: First of all, the documents she mentioned, the MOU and the Inuit positions on CanNor and the federal framework for aboriginal economic development, I can make available. The working plan is actually a one-page document that came from the Inuit position on the FFAED. Those are available.

• (1220)

The Chair: That will combine those.

Mr. Gordon Miles: There is a difference between the southern application of programs and what happens in the Arctic. There are three main programs INAC delivers for aboriginal economic development that come under their LED program. These programs were designed for first nations, frankly, because there are many more first nations they have to deal with.

What happens when an Inuit organization tries to apply those guidelines is that they run into some significant problems that aren't taken into account. For instance, because there are no band councils, it was determined at one point that an Inuit CEDO was not eligible for multi-year funding. It took a lot of negotiations back and forth. Finally, Treasury Board came back and said that they were fine and could have multi-year funding, and it was given to that organization. In the meantime, there are two other organizations that are still limited to one-year funding.

Why does that make a difference? Because in the north, first of all, to get qualified staff is very difficult. You're competing in a very limited labour pool. You're competing against the federal government and against the territorial government. You need to offer employees who have the experience you need a significant wage package. If you're on a one-year contract, that's almost impossible.

The Chair: We'll have to leave it at that. We're a little bit over time here, which I shouldn't allow.

Thank you very much, both of you.

Now we'll go to Mr. Bevington for five minutes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I had a question about housing. There has been some fairly significant two-year money for housing from the federal government, but it's not a long-term, ongoing program. How well can Nunavut handle the dollars it's been given in a shorter program? Do you see that it would be more advantageous to Nunavut to have a longer rollout of the dollars for this?

Mr. Gordon Miles: I don't know if it's a longer rollout as much as more dollars. The \$400 million, I believe, is the commitment at this point in time, and that is certainly significant, but it doesn't even much more than partially address the need. The housing lists are huge in every community, with, I think, one exception in Nunavut. The current program will help address that, but it is not going to eliminate the lists. In fact, if you look at the demographics, a lot more houses have to be built in the very near future or we're going to have a crisis.

When you look at the numbers in the south, it's 1.2 people or something, and in the north the average household is 3.7. That doesn't tell the story. You have three-bedroom houses with 12 or 14 people in them. There is absolutely no privacy. There is no room. These are small homes. They're not large. They talk about housing,

and the respiratory problems in Nunavut in particular, I think, are coming partly from housing—not solely, but that is an issue.

Listen, \$400 million is a huge amount of money; don't get me wrong. It's welcomed, and they're doing their best, but it's not the answer. There is a much greater need that needs to be addressed, and that hasn't happened yet.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: In the last federal budget there was \$200 million over two years: \$100 million for Nunavut, \$50 million for the Northwest Territories, and \$50 million for the Yukon. That was my understanding.

Mr. Gordon Miles: I think you're right. Is it a \$300 million total for Nunavut?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: That would be going back to maybe 2006. There was more money there.

We're funding something, but we're not funding it on a long-term basis. You're going to put in place expensive expediting delivery systems for housing products when you don't know two years from now whether you're going to continue to have that money.

That's my question to you. Would it help if there was an understanding that you could start planning five years ahead to build housing, and the federal government would understand that and come forward in that fashion?

Mr. Gordon Miles: Very much so. That would be helpful.

• (1225)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: I want to touch briefly on food mail, if I could. That food mail program is back up for review. There's a draft report on it.

Is there any sense that you could see that we could change the food mail system to be a retail subsidy at point of purchase? Do you think that might alleviate some of the problems? Is there a discussion going on in Nunavut on the food mail and the direction it should be taking?

Ms. Belinda Webb: To provide an update on the last part of your question, at the AGM in Nain, Nunatsiavut, our board actually discussed the review of the food mail program. It's currently a file that's in our health and environment department, and there are ongoing discussions regarding that. The main lead in regard to that discussion at the board meeting came from Inuvialuit, of which our regional president is Nellie Courmoyea. I believe they're talking about different ways by which this could probably improve. So there are discussions happening.

I can also provide, along with the suggested items from Mr. Stanton, a little bit of an update as to where we are in regard to the food mail.

The Chair: We'll have to call it at that, actually. We're right at time.

Did you have a very short comment to add?

Mr. Gordon Miles: I can't do anything short, I'm sorry.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go back to Mr. Payne for five minutes, and then I have Mr. Russell and Mr. Bagnell remaining on the list.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lemay, do you have a question?

Mr. Marc Lemay: Let me see.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right, we'll proceed with Mr. Payne, followed by Mr. Bagnell and Mr. Russell, and then we'll see where we are.

Go ahead.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Like my fellow colleagues, I thank you for your attendance here.

I was interested in a couple of areas. One certainly was around the shortage of housing. The first question I have is, what is the shortage? Do you have a number in terms of how many units are actually needed?

Mr. Gordon Miles: I don't. I spent ten years in Nunavut, so my experience is focused on Nunavut. I've only been with the national committee for a year now.

In Nunavut, in the community of Clyde River, which has about 800 people, there were 143 on a waiting list for housing, and that's 143 family units. Some of those would be single men with no children. They are never going to get a unit. It's just not going to be possible, because obviously they'll take the families first and work their way back.

In one case a family came back to the community. They were from there; they had left for three years for education. They came back, and it took them two years before they could get an accommodation.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I have another question. In terms of housing and certainly the shortage, what's the capacity to build? How many houses could they build per year?

Mr. Gordon Miles: I think they're probably stretching the limits now in Nunavut with the Nunavut Housing Trust. They could certainly build more units if they wanted to just contract it out and not worry about the training and the long-term benefits of having skilled journeymen in each community.

• (1230)

Mr. LaVar Payne: I understand that, but it doesn't tell me how many they can actually build per year. Do you know that number?

Mr. Gordon Miles: I think they could probably build depending on whatever funding was available. They can find contractors who can go in and do it. I don't think that's a limit.

Mr. LaVar Payne: My colleague here also was talking about education and in terms of the different dialects, so in terms of education for the students there, are they learning just in their own dialects, or are they learning other dialects, or are they also learning one or two of the official languages?

Ms. Belinda Webb: Most regions are taught in their own dialect from kindergarten to maybe grade 3. Specifically with Nunavik, where it's the northern part of Quebec, they do French, English, and their Inuit dialect.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. Payne, thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Russell.

Mr. Todd Russell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's good to have you here.

On climate change, I know that in the Inuit action plan there was a section on climate change. Am I correct in saying that?

Ms. Belinda Webb: Yes, I believe so.

Mr. Todd Russell: Yes, there was a section.

Can you give us a few tangible examples of the impact that climate change will have on the Inuit region, on the Inuit way of life, and how this will impact on economic development, for example?

Mr. Gordon Miles: One of the foremost impacts will be on the traditional economy. By traditional economy, we mean the land-based economy. It's a huge part of the economy within the Arctic.

I will tell a story, and I'll try to keep it short.

I was in Resolute Bay. A bunch of narwhals came into of the bay at eight o'clock in the morning. At nine o'clock that morning, I was at a house talking to a client and an ATV came down the road, pulling a trailer. On the trailer was a stack of *muktuk*, the narwhal skin. The driver stopped at every house, and depending on the number of people in that house, he delivered the muktuk to every house in the town. Now, what's the impact of that? How do you measure that? That's a way of life.

They've done studies, and at least 60% of the Inuit every week have country food: seal, caribou, narwhal, and char. It's their main diet. Now climate change is going to have an impact on the wildlife. They're going to move, and when they move, the hunters are going to have to get to them. In some areas, the wildlife may be moving closer to communities, which will make it easier. In other areas, the hunters are going to have to travel farther. The costs of traveling farther and the impacts will be substantial.

How do we support the traditional economy within the Arctic? How do we recognize the contribution of the hunter who goes out and comes back after 10 days with 70 caribou carcasses, and then shares them across the community? Who pays for that, because it's becoming an increasingly costly operation, particularly as you have to move farther. There are caribou hunts and muskox harvests organized in the west that are terrific generators of income and food, both commercial and traditional.

We have to find ways to support those and, at the same time, make sure there is a balance. There are wildlife management agreements in all the land claim agreements, and those have to be respected. But from an economic point of view, we have to understand how important that is and how we can contribute to it, support it, and encourage it.

The Chair: Mr. Russell, you have one minute.

Mr. Todd Russell: The other thing is that we already talk about an infrastructure deficit. But now there are some reports saying the impacts of climate change include accelerating deterioration of existing infrastructure, in terms of buildings sagging and the permafrost not being where it was, and those types of things. When you plan economic development, is that being quantified to any extent at all?

• (1235)

Mr. Gordon Miles: I think it's being quantified in new construction—although the Arctic Winter Games' arena in Iqaluit would be an example of where it wasn't. In new construction, they're generally now putting in place coolers to maintain the permafrost. I think all of the new larger buildings being built in the communities have those, because if they don't, the permafrost melts, and then you begin to get the shifting. For new buildings, that's taken care of. The cost for existing buildings has probably not been budgeted or anticipated as we move forward.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Russell.

Mr. Duncan, you have five minutes, and then it will be Mr. Bagnell's turn.

[English]

Mr. John Duncan: Thank you very much.

I guess my first question really relates to housing. I think we got tied up with the numbers on this, but my understanding is that in February 2009 the federal budget had \$100 million for housing in Nunavut. Then we also have this \$300 million Northern Housing Trust, which has \$50 million for each territory, plus \$100 million for immediate urgent housing needs in Nunavut. It's not clear to me whether or not those are additive.

Mr. Gordon Miles: I think the total is either \$300 million or \$400 million.

Mr. John Duncan: I think it is \$400 million, of which Nunavut is the major beneficiary. So there is a recognition of the urgent housing need in Nunavut. And housing is probably being built about as quickly as possible, given some of the constraints of trying to do things in a local context, which you were making reference to.

Another subject on which I want some clarification is education. You said something today that we're having difficulty processing, that the availability of post-secondary funding for Inuit students is different from what it is for first nations students. That certainly is not the understanding I had when I walked into the room, nor the understanding of the research staff attached to the committee.

Is this the way it is?

Mr. Gordon Miles: As far as I know, there is no funding for post-secondary education for Inuit, other than the territorial programs or the provincial programs that may exist.

Mr. John Duncan: Okay, we'll clearly have to check this out.

The other thing I wanted to say is that I've had the benefit of conversations with people from Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation about their Mary River project. It ties in with the question from the NDP on alternative energy, or hydro energy, and those kinds of things. My understanding is that there are some real opportunities that would benefit industry and the Inuit, and that many of these opportunities won't be reliant, for the most part, on government. They can be done collaboratively between industry and the Inuit.

First of all, you must be aware of these things. To me, they portend great revenue—not just the energy project, but also the significant mining projects that are looking to proceed. They look like major economic generators for the north that could change the equation in a major way in terms of the role of government.

Are you looking downstream with a very optimistic, positive attitude about all of this as well?

• (1240)

Mr. Gordon Miles: Yes. Unfortunately, I think the current economic crisis has thrown that schedule off by some period of time, and no one knows yet for how long.

First of all, in each of the regions, the land claim agreements call for Inuit impact and benefit agreements for all major projects, so that there will be negotiations right at the beginning of any project guaranteeing Inuit access to, or participation at some level in, these projects. And that's important.

In addition, each of the four Inuit organizations has very strong development corporations in place. And in all cases, those development corporations are actively pursuing partnerships, joint ventures, and contracts with these private companies.

I think mining has a huge potential, particularly within Nunavut and the Northwest Territories—and in all four regions. You have Voisey's Bay in Labrador, Raglan in Nunavik, plus there was another potential mine in Nunavik that I think is now on hold.

But again, there is potential right across the north for huge changes.

Mr. John Duncan: Thank you.

Do I have a little bit of time left?

The Chair: No, that's about it, Mr. Duncan. You were on a roll there and you just used up the whole time.

Mr. John Duncan: Okay, maybe I'll ask for another kick at the cat, then.

The Chair: Okay, you can have that after Mr. Bagnell, who is up for five minutes, and then we'll go back to you, Mr. Duncan.

Mr. John Duncan: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I'm going to give you four quick questions, and you can decide which ones you want to answer.

First, is the federal response to the Berger report sufficient, and what more should they do?

Second, I don't think you got to answer fully the question concerning food mail, and you may want to do that. There were some good things in the report, but also there were lines like "I'm not sure it's sustainable". That's like saying "I'm not sure it's sustainable that Inuit eat", so it's obviously not acceptable.

Concerning head start, you said you had a problem with quantity. In our area the problem is the number of head start programs: a lot of the communities don't have one, because all the money is used up for the ones that do.

Finally, do you have any comments on the decline in caribou herds and what is or isn't being done or should be done, or what's causing it?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bagnell.

Take the remaining time, which is almost four minutes.

Mr. Gordon Miles: Is the Berger report sufficient? It certainly highlighted a lot of the problems and it provides some guidance for all parties on where they should proceed. Obviously from Nunavut Tunngavik's perspective it wasn't the end result, because they launched their lawsuit against the federal government to try to force it.

Regarding the food mail program, I think there are problems with the food mail. It's probably a good program, but I think it needs to be reviewed. Hopefully they can come up with solutions to address some of the challenges it faces, both in allowing the consumers a clear understanding of the costs and also in allowing individuals to participate at a greater level than you currently see. On a personal note, I'd suggest that some of the restrictions upon the entry points might provide some cost savings, but that's personal.

Concerning the head start program from Nunavut's perspective, only two communities that I'm aware of have head start programs. The rest of the communities are struggling with their child care facilities, from lack of funding. They could certainly use many more programs, both early child care as well as head start, if funds were made available.

I really can't comment on declining caribou; I don't have enough background. I know there are indications in some areas that it's declining, and in other areas they're beginning to show up again. I know there are migration changes, but as to whether these are as a result of over-hunting or climate change or something else, I really can't suggest an answer.

•(1245)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: With regard to the fish quotas, is there still some anguish about the Inuit not getting their entire justified seafood and fish quotas?

Mr. Gordon Miles: Yes. The quotas in adjacent waters remain an issue. There are successful fisheries within Nunavut and Labrador, and there are some joint ventures between Nunavik, Labrador, and Nunavut. When the licences came up, the expectation was that they would be offered first to Nunavut in the adjacent waters. That did not happen, and there's still concern over this.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bagnell.

Now we'll go to Mr. Duncan for the final question. Then we just have a couple of very small administrative items. Then we'll wrap it up.

Mr. Duncan.

Mr. John Duncan: Thank you.

I want to try to clarify the post-secondary education issue. I have been provided with a document since I last spoke here.

INAC does not directly provide assistance under the post-secondary student support program in the three territories, because students in those jurisdictions are eligible for assistance from their territorial governments that is provided for in federal territorial transfers. That would be in Nunavut and Inuvialuit. In Nunavik, section 17 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement created the Kativik School Board. Their budgetary situation is renegotiated every three years. INAC pays its share to Le ministère de L'éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in Quebec, which in turn pays the Kativik School Board.

Nunatsiavut, as part of the self-government grant funding, receives an annual allocation for post-secondary education and economic development. This is reviewed on an ongoing basis through the self-government fiscal finance review process.

So it is not the regular PSSSP program, but there are federal transfers for education. I wanted to clarify that, and I think that was probably all.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Duncan. That helps put us all on the same page, it would appear.

I'd like to first of all thank our witnesses for joining us today and providing a very informative overview of the issue that's before us concerning economic development, certainly as it relates to the Inuit of Canada. This has been very helpful.

Committee members, before we break, I want to cover off one item, or perhaps two.

The first item concerns the title of our study. You'll recall that we considered this as "Northern Economic Development". We suggested also that the focus of the study be barriers and solutions. We could, if the committee wishes, confine and in fact change the name of our study. You'll see that it appears on our orders of the day as "Northern Economic Development". We could amend that somewhat and provide more clarity and focus to the name of our work by putting a colon, followed by "Barriers and Solutions". This would provide more clarity, certainly, to the public.

By the way, speaking of the public, I noticed that the *Whitehorse Daily Star* carried our piece about the visit as well, in today's paper.

To come back to the study, the implication would be, members, that because it would be part of the orders of the day, our considerations when we're deliberating these issues would be more confined to those barriers and solutions—perhaps not as broad a berth in terms of discussion.

That's the question I would put to you. Are there any problems with changing the name, then, to add "Barriers and Solutions" to the name of our study?

• (1250)

Mr. Todd Russell: No, I have no problem with inserting those two dots. The point has been made, concerning "Northern Economic Development"—it has been made by a lot of committee members, including me, Mr. Rickford, and others—that when we see that title, we give strength to the assumption of people in Labrador who say, "I'm in the north; that includes me." I'm sure that in northern Ontario or in Nunavik, for instance, you will get that presumption: if they're doing a northern economic development study, why don't they include me? So I don't know whether we want to refine it down, and I don't know how we would do it.

It's a territorial study, a northern economic development study on the territories. I think we made that point in the press release, and I thank you for that. We made it clear in the press release that we're only studying the territories, but it could have some residual impact, and some of the strategies or suggestions or recommendations we make could apply to areas outside of the territories. But I don't know whether we could refine the title a bit more. I don't know.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Todd Russell: I'm making this suggestion because even a few constituents I had up from Labrador this week said, "You're doing a

study on northern economic development? When are you going to come to Labrador, or when can we come to the committee?" I said we'll see.

I blamed it all on the Conservatives, of course, but.... I'm joking.

My point is well taken; I don't want to confuse the point. The point is that there are other people who consider themselves northerners, Inuit or other indigenous people, who are not in there.

The Chair: Mr. Bevington, did you want to chime in on this one, as well?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: You could go with "Northern Territories Economic Development". That would clearly delineate what's going on.

The Chair: Okay, so it would be "Northern Territories Economic Development: Barriers and Solutions".

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Did he say "northern territorial"?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Territories. Northern territories. That would encompass the three territories.

The Chair: Is that agreed?

An hon. member: It's better.

The Chair: It would be "Northern Territories Economic Development: Barriers and Solutions".

An hon. member: Right on.

The Chair: Okay, it's done.

Finally members, this is our last meeting until we meet in Whitehorse on November 16. In terms of attire for our meetings, I'm suggesting that you don't really need a tie. A jacket, open collar, or a sweater underneath a jacket are completely appropriate, along with whatever outerwear you wish, of course. Sealskin ties are completely in order, and in fact quite appropriate, I might add. Informal business attire would be quite appropriate for this trip.

Have a safe trip.

Again, thank you to our witnesses. Well done.

The meeting is adjourned.

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