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## Standing Committee on National Defence

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, November 5, 2009**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Maxime Bernier**



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• (0910)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC)):** Welcome everybody.

I would like to call to order the 38th meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence, in accordance with Standing Order 108 and the motion adopted by this committee on February 23, 2009. We continue our study of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic.

[English]

We have with us some witnesses from the Makivik Corporation, Mr. Michael Gordon and Mr. Daniel Ricard. Welcome.

You will have five to eight minutes for your presentation, and after that members of the committee will ask you questions.

Thank you for being with us.

Mr. Gordon.

**Mr. Michael Gordon (Vice-President, Economic Development, Makivik Corporation):** Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, for giving us the chance to appear in front of you today to speak about Arctic sovereignty.

I am from Kuujuaq, a town in Nunavik, but I grew up with the federal day school system, so my French isn't that good. It pre-dated the provincial school system, so I will need the help of the translator.

Makivik is the organization mandated to protect the rights and interests of the Nunavik Inuit under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and under the 2008 Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement, which is known as NILCA. That is an agreement between the Canadian government, the Nunavut government, and the Inuit of Nunavik and Labrador, which provides Nunavik Inuit with ownership of approximately 7,000 offshore islands in Hudson Bay, Hudson Strait, and Ungava Bay.

As you can gather just by hearing that we have over 7,000 islands, Nunavik is a very large place. In fact, after Nunavut, Nunavik is the second largest Inuit territory in Canada in terms of both geography and population. Inuit constitute the overwhelming majority of the region's population. Our shoreline is over 17,000 kilometres, and Nunavik's land mass covers 660,000 square kilometres, or approximately the top one-third of Quebec.

Nunavik is part of the Canadian Arctic. It has predominantly an Arctic landscape. A large portion of its territory lies above the tree line, and seven of the fourteen communities are actually located north of the 60th parallel. We are isolated. There are no roads connecting any of our communities to the main grid. The Hudson Strait, which provides waterway access to the heart of the Canadian Arctic, flows right by our shores. These facts are particularly noteworthy given that the federal government appears to have decided to exclude Nunavik from its northern strategy.

We are not second-class Inuit. Nunavik's exclusion from the northern strategy is based on artificial boundaries, not geographical or social ones. We are Inuit, just like our cousins in Nunavut, and we want the Canadian government to recognize this simple reality, in the same way it recognized Quebec as a nation. We request that the Canadian government clearly acknowledge that the northern strategy applies to Nunavik to the same extent as to other regions in Canada's Arctic.

As for the issue of assertion of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, we feel that the federal government seems to have relegated this objective to the establishment of a military presence in the north. In this context, if we were to be asked whether we think that National Defence currently has the capacity to adequately provide for our security and protection in the north, our short answer is no.

I'll bring up a few points to back this up. A good example of it is that the government cannot carry out effective search and rescue operations in our regions, and vessels must operate in an environment where there are no safe anchorages or safe harbours. We would argue that despite its legal claims on its Arctic territory, in many areas the government lacks in a practical sense the means to fully exercise its sovereignty in the Arctic.

This problem becomes even more acute because Canada is faced with increasing pressure to open up the Northwest Passage. Ships will eventually go through, one way or another. There is already a critical need for additional marine infrastructure and services, and this will increase significantly in the coming years.

• (0915)

On a positive note, Canada's response to this situation can provide significant opportunities for northern residents and pave the way for new partnerships between governments and Inuit organizations such as Makivik. With NILCA, we have already proven our capacity to negotiate win-win agreements with our neighbours and governments.

Our shores and many of our airports are unprotected. Anybody can land by sea in Nunavik and remain undetected for long periods of time. If they were to be detected, it would most probably be by a hunter or a ranger patrol.

Another point relates to the Canadian government's being unable to carry out effective search and rescue missions in the North. It usually takes as much as five days for CFB Trenton and the rangers' base operations in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu to authorize a search party of the rangers. When a resident is lost in the north, a community will not wait that long to start a search. If a resident is lost at sea, people in the community have access to a large community-owned boat, which was funded by Makivik and the Kativik regional government, while the operations are funded by the municipalities.

When authorization is finally given to start search and rescue missions, it is usually the Canadian Rangers who are deployed. We feel that the rangers do a good job, because they quite often resort to regional expertise, such as hunters who know the prevailing winds and the currents. The rangers also have a positive impact on our communities, and we are most appreciative of the services they carry out, and more specifically, the training they provide under the junior rangers program.

Unfortunately for our needs, the rangers are under-equipped. They have no snowmobiles, four-wheelers, or boats that can be used in search and rescue missions. The rangers have to use their own machines to go searching.

Another point is that there is a serious lack of safe anchorages in Nunavik. Cargo volumes and vessel sizes are both increasing. The result is that ships have to anchor further and further out. This is a situation that increasingly exposes them to poor weather and dangerous conditions. This problem has to be resolved, because our northern communities depend on organizations such as Makivik and shipping subsidiaries of Makivik such as NEAS to deliver goods.

There is also a growing number of cruise ships in the north. In fact, another subsidiary of Makivik is Cruise North Expeditions. It brought about 800 tourists to the north this summer. Should an accident on one of these cruise ships ever arise, we feel that effective and speedy rescue missions could not be carried out. This would most certainly have an adverse effect on Canada's northern tourism as a whole, since our ships visit both Nunavik and Nunavut.

At present, we need suitable ports, harbours, and terminals, along with more navigational aids and marine mobile communication services. Our waters are uncharted, for the most part, and so we need hydrographic charts to map our uncharted waters. Makivik Corporation operates a new subsidiary that provides some of these services to northern residents and government departments, and if there were any money to be put toward more hydrographic charts, we'd be able to provide some of those services.

As a result of the federal-provincial program, Nunavik's 14 communities now benefit from basic marine infrastructure designed to protect fishermen from the perils of the sea. We are most grateful for the contributions we have received and the positive impact they have had on the local economy and the safety of our residents and

hunters. We'd like to point out that Makivik's construction division built every one of those 14 marine infrastructures.

● (0920)

The time is right for an opportunity to work on the construction of a deep-sea port. If such a deep-sea port were built in Nunavik it would allow the Department of National Defence to carry out military missions from Nunavik. It would also create significant economic opportunities for our region and help decrease the high cost of living.

We feel that infrastructure projects of this type in the north have been evaluated in terms of how they will enhance Canada's Arctic sovereignty, and not simply on the basis of their commercial feasibility, as would be the case in the south. Arctic sovereignty must be defined in more operational terms. It needs to be carried out with the help of government programs designed to meet the changing northern realities, and delivered in partnership with regional organizations.

Arctic sovereignty along with the northern strategy should be designed to allow northern regions, including Nunavik, to partner with the Government of Canada in meeting its military and socio-economic development opportunities.

Thank you very much.

I guess I worked myself into a sweat presenting this to you.

**The Chair:** Now I will give the floor to Mr. Wilfert.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming. You did a very good job, sweat or no sweat.

The Inuit of Canada and the crown signed a partnership accord back in May 2005. Are you a part of that agreement?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Yes.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** That was to lead up to the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Inuit action plan of February 2007.

You indicated that you're not part of the northern strategy of the government. On what basis do you think you were excluded? You make a very good point that Inuit are Inuit across the north. They have very similar issues in dealing with climate change, changing patterns in the north, social development, economic development, etc. Why do you think you have been excluded?

● (0925)

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Daniel is going to help me on this question.

The northern strategy is mainly geared toward Nunavut and the western Arctic. Labrador and Nunavik have been excluded from it mainly because we fall within the provinces. We fall under the Quebec government, and some of the programs offered would be offered through the northern strategy. Some of them might go through the provincial government, so we wouldn't fall under that northern strategy.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** How do you see the role of the provinces, whether it's Quebec or Newfoundland and Labrador, in terms of your situation and interaction with them and the federal government?

**Mr. Daniel Ricard (Economic Development Officer, Economic Development, Makivik Corporation):** Right now Quebec plays a major role in housing, for example. As you know, right now in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories public housing is basically the Canadian government's responsibility. In Quebec, public housing falls under a federal-provincial agreement. So in this case the province plays a major role.

To go back to your question about why we feel we are excluded from the northern strategy, if you take the document that was distributed in the summer by Minister Strahl, it basically explains what the northern strategy is all about. On page 18 there is a map that shows the resource knowledge—the minerals that are in Canada's north. We don't see anything here in Nunavik, yet we do have mines in Nunavik.

As Michael just said, we feel that because we're part of a province we are excluded from the northern strategy.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** It seems to fall short. I'll read this following statement, Mr. Chair:

But the North needs new attention. New opportunities are emerging across the Arctic, and new challenges from other shores. Our Government will bring forward an integrated northern strategy focusing on strengthening Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and improving and devolving governance, so that northerners have greater control over their destinies.

Those are the words from the Speech from the Throne on October 16, 2007. We seem to have fallen quite short. The aspirations, I think we'd all agree, are wonderful, but it's show me the beef here. They haven't delivered in this case. It's the northern strategy focusing on the north, bringing all people.... It doesn't say only parts of the north.

What have you done from the time that this was enunciated in terms of trying, either with your provincial government or with the federal government, to bridge this glaring gap?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** At every opportunity, our president, Pita Aatami, president of Makivik Corporation, tried to bring this up with the government through the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. I believe you had presentations from them this week.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Yes.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** We've also tried to use the Quebec government, to see if they could push on our behalf to get us included in the northern strategy.

But also, provincially we're working hand in hand, hopefully, with the Quebec government on their *plan nord*. So to that extent, we're making a lot of headway with the provincial government, but not so with the federal government.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Clearly, the federal government has responsibilities in areas. You talk about search and rescue and the failure on the issue of ports. Obviously, in terms of sovereignty, if in fact we are going to exert our sovereignty, we have to have the ability to do so, and if we don't have those in place, that's clearly not a provincial responsibility. That's clearly the role of the federal government.

**A voice:** Exactly.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** What suggestions would you have for us to deal with the issues of search and rescue? What would be the best vehicles to improve search and rescue in the north?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I'll try to answer that.

Many of the search and rescues that take place in the north aren't well done. We had a case where we had a family on a freighter canoe, a 22-foot freighter canoe, leaving my village and going to another village. There was a problem with their motor. It was not bad weather, it was a problem with the motor, and the Hercules search and rescue plane searched for it.

There were a couple of ships that came to look for the canoe, but they wouldn't listen to the people of the region. They would not listen to the hunters who know about the currents of the Ungava Bay, because it goes from west to east in a circular fashion. They would not listen to us and they would only search where the last seen point was. We didn't have the capacity to go further out into sea and look for them.

On another point, in Nunavut one of our subsidiaries, Air Inuit Ltd., our airline, was chartered by the municipality of Igloolik to look for Mr. Kunuk. I forgot his first name, but he's the father of Zacharias Kunuk, the producer of *Atanarjuat*. This man, an 81-year-old man, had not returned from camping for one month, even though there were many search and rescue planes that came by, the Hercules. After they chartered our Air Inuit plane, Air Inuit finally found the man. He was fine. He just couldn't get back home since his motor broke down as well.

There are things on which we can work together with the Department of National Defence and the search and rescue portion of it, but they just won't listen to us. The land, the predominant winds, the currents, they're just different from what they've learned about.

I don't know if I'm even answering your question.

● (0930)

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** That's helpful. It obviously shows it's better to be a good listener than a talker around those issues.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** *Merci beaucoup, monsieur Gordon.*

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Bachand.

[English]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Merci.

Monsieur Gordon, you'll need your translation device, because I'll be talking in French.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Okay.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** *M'entendez-vous?*

Is it translated?

[Translation]

Are you getting the English interpretation? Good.

First of all, I would like you to convey my best wishes to Pita Atami. As you know, I was involved in the Indian Affairs and Northern Development file from 1993 to 2000. I do think that you have an excellent lobbyist in the person of Guy St-Julien. He was one of my colleagues at the time and he is a staunch defender of your position.

I'd like to come back to the seven villages in Northern Quebec that have been excluded from the Northern Strategy. I have a hard time understanding why these villages located between the 60th and 62nd parallels have been excluded. Other islands located much further to the south, including the Sanikiluaq Islands, known as the Belcher Islands in English, Akimiski Island and even some located along the 52nd parallel, have been included in the Northern Strategy. Geographically speaking, something isn't right. You don't have to have a PhD in geography to see, with the help of a map, that villages north of the 60th parallel are being left out, while islands near the 52nd parallel are being included in the strategy.

I would also like to remind the committee, Mr. Chair, that Quebec's National Assembly unanimously decided to ask the federal government to include these seven villages in Northern Quebec in the Northern Strategy.

I would also like you to explain to me why the Sanikiluaq Islands and Akimiski Island, which border Quebec, were designated as part of Nunavut. From a geographical standpoint, this makes no sense. I even recall travelling to these islands to demand that they be given back to Quebec. Not only were they not given back to Quebec, a decision was made to exclude some Quebec communities from the Northern Strategy, while these Nunavut territories were included, despite the fact that Nunavut is located approximately 2,000 kilometres away.

While you're explaining that to me, I'd also like you to answer the following question: what do you lose by not being included in the Northern Strategy? Are we putting too much into the Northern Strategy?

I have other questions, but I will let you answer these two first.

• (0935)

[English]

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Thank you, Mr. Bachand.

I guess my presentation wasn't that clear. Thank you for the question. It's very enlightening, I think, for the members of the committee.

Nunavik is situated north of the 55th parallel. All of our communities, the 14 communities, are north of the 55th parallel. Seven of our communities are above the 60th parallel, and between the 50th and 60th there are seven others. But we're all excluded; the whole territory is excluded from the northern strategy.

You're correct about Sanikiluaq and the Belcher Islands. Our cousins live there, very close cousins to the Inuit of Nunavik, especially that of Kuujjuarapik and Umiujaq, and they're included.

I guess INAC would be the best department to answer those questions, but we're excluded mainly based on having been or being part of a province, within a province.

You might want to add to that, Daniel. I'm making it too short.

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** If you're asking us what we think we don't have, because we're part of the northern strategy, we look at some of the recent commitments put forward by Minister Strahl in the August press conference on the northern strategy. It does show here that in terms of the recent commitments, the Canadian government decided to establish a deep-water berthing and fueling facility in Nanisivik, so this is good, obviously.

We're just saying we obviously wouldn't mind having the same type of thing in Nunavik, especially for all kinds of military and economic reasons, as Michael said in his presentation.

I would say it mostly has to do with infrastructure. We have an awful lot of stuff already. As you know, the INAC people have talked about the fact that they now have a Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. We are not excluded because we can refer to the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the regions of Quebec. Being Nunavik, part of Quebec, we have access to that agency. We feel, however, we could probably be excluded from major infrastructure projects, such as a deep-water port.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Another reality, Mr. Ricard, is that some mines are excluded from the Northern Strategy, whereas all of the other mines... While we have details about the mines, two have been omitted, namely the Raglan Mine and the Canadian Royalties mine, both of which are located north of the 60th parallel. These two mines are not on the list. As I see it, this is another example of an injustice toward the Inuit of Nunavik and toward Quebeckers.

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** We were just talking about that earlier. On page 18 of the same document, mention is made of the mineral resources in the north, but there is nothing said about Nunavik's mineral resources. Therefore, we have to wonder if these resources are included or not.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Does the government of Nunavut contribute as much money as Quebec does to the Inuit in the Far North? Does Nunavut have an easier time of it than Nunavik, given that it receives money from the federal government while Nunavik does not?

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds.

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** We have not looked at how much the federal government contributes to Nunavut versus what it gives to Nunavik. That's something we should do.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** We certainly come out on the losing end.

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** I cannot comment on that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bachand.

[English]

Now we'll give the floor to Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Thank you.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming today. I'm filling in for Jack Harris, who normally sits on this committee.

I just want to continue the line of questioning my colleagues have started around why Nunavik is excluded from the northern strategy.

I know a document was passed out called "Delineation of Canada's North: An Examination of the North-South Relationship in Canada", by Stats Canada, and it's interesting, because they are talking about the fact that many times the convenient political boundaries ignore similarities in climate and physical attributes, economic structure, and population settlement patterns between the territories and northern parts of Labrador, Quebec, and so on.

The map they attached I think is a really good visual representation of the northern transition line, and you can see that Nunavik is clearly included in what Stats Canada is looking at as a northern transition line. Have you had any reasonable explanation about why there is a difference between what one department is talking about in terms of delineation of the north and what another department is talking about?

I think you and I had a brief conversation in advance that the aboriginal affairs committee is currently looking at northern economic development, and to date you haven't been included. You haven't been invited. You haven't been given any notice about appearing before that committee. Can you comment on that?

● (0940)

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I think a lot of it stems from the name of our region being so close to the name of Nunavut. Maybe people in elected positions think it's the same thing, that Nunavut encompasses the whole north. That's what I suspect. But our territory is called Nunavik, with a v-i-k at the end.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I think it's an interesting point, though, because when I've travelled north what we often hear is about the lack of understanding that people south of 60 have about differences, but also there are some threads that connect the north.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Exactly.

I'm just looking at that map. The islands that Mr. Bachand referred to are way below the 55th parallel, just to the left of Nunavik.

From the government there, I don't know if you have received a reasonable explanation. The main one is that we're in the province of Quebec, and when you paint the province of Quebec a different colour from say Newfoundland or Ontario, it includes Nunavik. So that's the explanation we've come to understand from the government. As you said, it doesn't stem from.... How did they mention it in this paper? "This definition ignores similarities in climatic and physical attributes" of that area. So it's based on artificial boundaries.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** It seems difficult to think that you would be talking about a strategy that would be up here in Baffin Island and ignore Nunavik. It just doesn't make any sense. You are separated by a passage of water. There doesn't seem to be a rational explanation for it.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** You have my vote.

I don't think there is, except that we're in the province of Quebec.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** That's not really a rational explanation, though.

Do I still have a bit of time?

**The Chair:** Three minutes.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Can I just shift gears for a minute?

I was reviewing some of the testimony that came before this committee. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. both talked about the land claims. Of course, I pulled out the land claims implementation policy and noticed that Makivik is part of the land claims coalition. When we're talking about Arctic sovereignty, my understanding of it is that Arctic sovereignty will truly be achieved when we fully implement the land claims agreement that had been negotiated and signed in good faith. And of course we've had the Auditor General back in 2003 say that the government, INAC, cannot just implement the letter of the agreement; they must implement the spirit of the agreement.

Can you tell me how you think full land claims implementation would actually help establish sovereignty in the north, in Nunavik, in particular?

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** As you know, right now our land claims agreements are settled: James Bay and NILCA, the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement. We are basically in the midst of implementing all this right now.

I would say that on many of the issues right now that we've negotiated with the Quebec and Canadian governments, it's going along pretty well. I would say that the major hurdle right now would be housing. Even though we have a good housing agreement with Canada and Quebec, there's still a big housing shortage. Even though there are, let's say, 915 houses left to be built in 14 communities, if you put 915 houses in 14 communities, that has quite a big economic impact. In some small communities, building 40 houses would have a major social and economic impact on the community.

So in that sense I would say once everything is implemented you would probably achieve a higher degree of economic development.

● (0945)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Still, from Makivik's perspective, they don't have some of the same issues that some of the other partners around the land claims coalition agreements have had. It seems that for you housing is one of the major barriers, major stumbling blocks. That's good news.

I don't hear the buzzer going, so I just want to come back to the rangers for a second. You said in your presentation that it can be up to five days before CFB Trenton will authorize a search and rescue mission. We have all kinds of modern telecommunications technology, so why would it take five days?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** There is a whole slew of things that have to happen before CFB Trenton can authorize a search and rescue, including how long the person's been away from home or has not returned from hunting. The police in the region have to be notified and then a few things have to happen before CFB Trenton is authorized to go ahead with it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** Mr. Chair...

**The Chair:** Fifteen seconds, Mr. Ricard.

[English]

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** Basically, we feel there is a lack of communication between Trenton and Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. Why would it take five days? You could probably ask the same questions to those people.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now I will give the floor to Mr. Hawn.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you both for coming.

I do have to correct one statement that you made. We did not recognize the province of Quebec as a nation. We recognized the Québécois as a nation, in a cultural and linguistic sense.

I do have to say I was really pleased to hear Mr. Bachand defending Canadian sovereignty so hard in the province of Quebec. I appreciate that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Thank you.

[English]

I want the money.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Believe me, we know.

With respect—and I take your points on geography and so on—I would suggest that the reason it seems you've been excluded is strictly because of provincial boundaries.

But along that line, you talked about support from the Province of Quebec. Could you elaborate on the kind of support you've had from the Province of Quebec to be included in the broader issue of northern sovereignty?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** With Quebec—

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** The encouragement or the help you've been getting from the Province of Quebec to be included in the national issue of northern sovereignty.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I am not quite sure how to answer that.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Has Quebec been helping you become included in the national northern sovereignty solution?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I believe so. I did see some correspondence. I believe it was one of the ministers, or Premier Charest, who said he would bring it up...or he did bring it up, with Minister Strahl, I believe. I am not quite sure. There was some stuff about a year and a half ago.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** So there was some talk.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Yes, there was.

● (0950)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Okay, fair enough.

Just as a point on the SAR, the rangers are a great resource. I have travelled with the rangers. I have lived with them for a couple of days. They're a pretty neat organization.

Within the last year or so we have made a commitment to re-equip and expand the rangers. What is your view of that, and where do you think that will end up?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** A few of my friends have broken down ski-doo's that can't be replaced by the rangers. They can't go hunting because of it.

They do get a nominal fee, a rental rate for using their machines, but they break down. There's a lot of wear and tear on those machines because they're used quite heavily for patrols.

I am very happy to hear about better equipment for the rangers.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I've been with them when they were welding bed springs to make A-frames on snowmobiles. They're very adaptable and resourceful people.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Yes.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Sticking with SAR for a minute, you mentioned it takes up to five days for Trenton to authorize a search by the rangers. What's the norm? Does it take up to five days? Is five days the norm, or is the norm shorter than that?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I think four or five days is pretty much the norm. In distance alone, CFB Trenton is very far from Nunavik, and even farther from Nunavut. It takes a long time for the planes to arrive.

It's mainly recovery, not a search and rescue. It becomes a recovery process instead of a search and rescue in those cases.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** You mentioned that part of the reason for the delay is cultural. Your people are out on the land. They're hunting, fishing, camping and so on, and it is not unusual for someone to be out of contact for some period of time. Is that a contributing factor, needing to make sure this is a search and rescue situation?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** No. Hunters know they have to inform someone of the time they should be returning from the land. If there's a weather issue they might return a day later, maybe two days later. If it's not weather-related, it becomes pretty easy to tell if there's some type of emergency.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** You mentioned the military, and obviously the military plays a significant role in the north. But as you're aware, INAC is the lead agency for northern sovereignty. Do you see the fact that the Department of Indian Affairs is the lead agency and DND is not the lead agency as a positive?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** It's still the government.

It could be good, I guess. I didn't really think of it in terms of that. We probably have better contact with INAC than we do with the Department of National Defence.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** You mentioned deep-sea ports and charting. Obviously, your people have managed for centuries with the charting such as it is, and that is not an excuse for bad charting. We heard from other groups that this has been an historical challenge for many more than the people of Nunavik. We heard that only about 20% of the Arctic waters are in fact charted, and a great deal of that is unreliable. I mean, it's a good point, but it's a much broader issue than only in your part of the north.

With respect to deep-sea ports, we would probably like to have a number of them throughout the north. Obviously, it takes time and it takes money. Do you have any suggestions on specific locations, recommendations that this would be a good spot for whatever reason for a deep-sea port?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** There have been studies done on deep-sea ports before. We would need one, but it wouldn't be more than that in our region of Nunavik.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I understand. The one at Nanisivik, as you mentioned, is obviously a good idea. One farther south, and perhaps one farther west....

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** We're on the mainland, the mainland being Canada. We're not on an island. A deep-sea port with a road system to that deep-sea port would be very beneficial, I believe, for economic opportunities for the north and the south.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I don't think anybody would argue with that, but the cost is obviously a factor for any government.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** May I add a little bit to that, to the hydrographic charts? As you said, only about 20% of the Arctic waters are charted. It's really difficult for the cruise ships to enter certain areas, especially when the waters are not charted. Even though there's a huge cliff here and another one there and it must be thousands of feet deep in there, they can't enter that harbour because it's uncharted. It's a risk.

There are very scenic and very nice areas they cannot go to. They have to follow pretty much a straight path, because the waters are not charted.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** It's been a challenge for a very long time.

**The Chair:** I will now give the floor to Ms. Neville.

• (0955)

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Thank you. I will be sharing my time with Mr. Wilfert.

Thank you again for being here this morning.

I wonder if you could expand on the question that Mr. Hawn asked you about the role of the Quebec government in its dealings with Canada, with you, and ensuring that you are part of the northern strategy. I'd like to know a little bit more about your discussions with the Quebec government, and the Quebec government's discussions with Canada.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** We have very good communications with the Province of Quebec, with Premier Charest, and with the previous premiers as well. Our communication lines are very good.

Pita, our president, brought up the issue of Nunavik not being part of the northern strategy with the government. I don't have my papers

with me, but I believe it was with the premier. He was to bring this issue up with the Canadian government, Minister Strahl mainly.

I believe it was brought up, but it didn't go any further than that. That seems to be the case.

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** May I add? We haven't seen any actual correspondence on this from Pita Aatami to Premier Charest or his aboriginal affairs minister, but we know they've talked.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Actually, there was some documentation too.

On the other point, we're working well with the Quebec government for their *plan nord*. There's a big meeting happening tomorrow, I believe, or today in Quebec City. There's going to be an announcement. We're being kept updated as to what is being planned. They're saying Nunavik is going to be a big part of it, because they have no choice.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** What recommendations would you like to see this committee make, as far as your concerns?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** If you're talking about a northern strategy, make it a northern strategy for the northern population and the geography—the people and the land. Don't exclude us just because we happen to be in the province of Quebec. It's based on artificial boundaries. Base it on real things: the land and the people. That's all I can say.

Do you have much to add to that?

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** No, just the fact that, for example, in terms of *plan nord*, we understand it will be announced later on today that the Quebec government is establishing working committees with people from Makivik and Kativik regional government in order to determine exactly how *plan nord* could be realized and implemented. Perhaps this could serve as a model for the Canadian government's northern strategy—i.e., to involve the people who actually live there.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I'd like to add one more thing to that.

The Canadian government has to have more of a presence in the north in terms of Arctic sovereignty. As I said earlier, if there's someone missing or if there is a submarine.... I don't know what detection measures the Department of National Defence has, but if a submarine appears in our waters, people are not going to know about it. It's going to be the hunter who finds maybe a submarine or a ship, but the Canadian government won't find out before we do. That's what I'm saying.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wilfert, you have one minute and thirty seconds.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, it's obvious we'll have to not only work horizontally across government departments in Ottawa. Obviously a trilateral approach with provincial, territorial, and aboriginal organizations—in this case, the Inuit—is preferable.

On the issue of the Arctic Rangers, in terms of reconceptualizing the Arctic Rangers, since we are talking not just about sovereignty but about climate change, what role do you see them playing in terms of environmental monitoring; in terms of their often under-utilization for work; in terms of assisting with work for those unqualified or unable to work in wage employment in small communities; in terms of dealing with supply across the country with regard to food in the north—in other words, in terms of expanding beyond the role they have now?

• (1000)

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** In many cases the rangers are hunters. A good majority, maybe 99% of them, are capable hunters in their communities. That's how they're chosen to be part of the rangers. They're given training on how to do search and rescue patterns and such on the land and in the water. So they're already part of the wage economy, because they hunt and provide for the community in terms of getting country food and fish. I can't really tell how you could add to that.

The land-based economy is quite significant in the north. The amount of food provided or put on the household table is quite considerable compared to the food brought in by the wage economy. The land-based economy also includes arts and crafts and seamstresses making parkas and winter clothing, which is heavily used in the north.

I don't know if I've answered that.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Maybe I'll come back to climate change later.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gordon.

We'll now give the floor to Mr. Braid.

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Gordon and Mr. Ricard, for being here this morning and for your presentation.

Mr. Gordon, towards the end of your presentation you mentioned that there have been a number of federal contributions and those have made a positive impact on social and economic development in Nunavik. Could you elaborate a little bit on what those contributions have been, and specifically what they've done?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I mentioned the marine infrastructures program. It's basically a breakwater, or an artificial harbour, which provides close to 24-hour access for the hunters and people out and about on the waters, giving them a way to return to home base.

In Nunavik we have the largest tides in the world. We had one of our river systems measured for depth. I don't know if anybody is here from the Bay of Fundy, but Nunavik was measured to have even higher tides. We beat it by a couple of feet, or a couple of inches, but it was a decent amount. So we have that challenge—there are a lot of big tides in our regions and the weather plays a big part.

Marine infrastructures have helped out the communities a lot, and Makivik Corporation provided the services to put up these breakwater marine infrastructures. They serve an important need. But it's real basic—the ships cannot anchor to those marinas or offload on them.

Sorry to be a little wishy-washy.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** No, that's helpful.

The central theme of your presentation is that the federal government's Arctic strategy should include Nunavik. But the reality is that Nunavik is part of the province of Quebec. Could you speak to that, if you can? I'm trying to assess the level of political will or openness on the part of the province of Quebec for the federal government to be more involved in the affairs of Nunavik.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** If there's more money, they'll accept it.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** I think we heard that earlier from our colleagues. But have discussions taken place? What does the landscape look like?

• (1005)

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** With respect to housing, we have the federal government looking at bringing in a catch-up program, and we hope this will be set up this coming spring. The federal government and the Quebec government would put in money to provide the extra housing needed for the region. So there's always that openness.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** That is an important development.

Could you describe your relationship with the Government of Nunavut?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** We don't have too many dealings with the Government of Nunavut. Makivik Corporation deals, when we have to, with the Nunavut government, but we also deal with NTI, a Nunavut company similar to Makivik. We work through the Inuitape-Canadame, so we have good relations with them.

The Nunavut government seems to worry about their region, rightly so. We work closely together on our marine region. We have some subsidiaries that we jointly own with companies from Nunavut, like the NEAS company. We're joint owners of that company with a company from Nunavut.

When we do have to work together, we can, and communication lines are good.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now I will give the floor to Monsieur Bachand.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to add that the Quebec National Assembly has requested that villages located north of the 60th parallel be included in the Northern Strategy. The Quebec government is not the one opposed to this move. Quite the contrary, in fact. In my opinion, it comes back to Canada's relationship with first nations, the Métis and the Inuit. The federal government has a certain responsibility toward them.

For that reason, the National Assembly believes that it is unfair for Inuvialuit—located more to the west—instead of Nunavik to be included in the strategy. To my knowledge, unless I'm mistaken, the people of Labrador are not included either in the Northern Strategy. They are asking to be included, as they automatically come under provincial jurisdiction, in this case, under Newfoundland's jurisdiction. Perhaps the government needs to bow to the obvious, namely that it has a responsibility in this regard and must contribute.

We must stop thinking like White People, that is according to defined borders. Since the dawn of time, the Inuit have not defined themselves by borders and have travelled the length and breadth of the Far North. Regions must not be penalized today because Ottawa is establishing boundaries. Earlier, you referred to the people of Nunavut as “your cousins”. Certain cousins mustn't be given more advantages than others. Everyone must be treated equitably.

I want to come back to the issue of housing. According to information that I obtained from the provincial government, a major housing program is in the works. Provision is being made to build 1,000 houses. The Quebec government has apparently already committed the sum of \$300 million over five years. Apparently, all that is needed to move forward with the program is for the federal government to come on board. I wouldn't go so far as to say that the government is trying to exploit this situation for political gain, but perhaps it is waiting for elections to be called in Ottawa to announce...

Have you also heard the news that Quebec is asking Ottawa to kick in \$250 million, while the province would contribute \$300 million over five years toward the construction of 1,000 homes? Perhaps you could enlighten us further about this initiative?

[English]

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Bachand.

The federal government is looking at providing a catch-up program, providing about 1,140 houses, I believe, for the next seven years after it announces it. After this, we wouldn't have a housing shortage. We have the regular housing program and the negotiations for that. Since it has to be renewed by springtime, by March 31, they are going ahead as planned.

This provides about 60 houses per year, but it does not catch up to the shortage that we have. We need those 1,140 houses to catch up with the housing shortages. The shortage of housing in the Arctic, in Nunavik, is very stressful for the families in Nunavik. Overcrowding creates family problems. We have families where there are multiple generations. We have grandparents with their children who are now adults and who have their own kids. Their brothers might stay in the same house, too.

That creates family problems. It creates social problems in the communities, and it can also be a health hazard. We have swine flu happening in Canada and around the world right now, so transmission of these things could be very risky for many of these families.

We are very well aware of the housing program and the catch-up program that is being suggested by the federal government. We were unhappy to hear recently that it might be delayed a bit. That might be due to the election.

•(1010)

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Quebec has already announced that it is contributing \$300 million. The province has said that it is ready to move forward and that it is only waiting for the federal government to sign the program agreement. Can you confirm this?

[English]

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I'm not 100% certain on that one. This is a file our president, Pita Aatami, usually keeps close to his heart and it's a very important issue—

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** And his pocket also?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Yes. It's a very important issue for the whole region too.

There has been some announcement, but I believe it's a renewal of the regular housing program like the Quebec government provides.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gordon.

I will give the floor to Mr. Payne. I know you want to share your time also.

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be sharing my time with Mr. Boughen.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for coming today. I'm learning some very interesting things about the north.

I have a couple of follow-up questions.

My friend Mr. Bachand surprised the heck out of me talking about an election. The only ones I know who are talking about an election are the Liberal Party. However, having said that—

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** We're talking action.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** You said there were something like 60 houses per year.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** That's the basic program. I believe about \$12 million a year is provided, and if Makivik Construction can decrease the price per house, we can add more houses.

It's larger than that. This year around 100 houses were built, maybe even a few more.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** How many houses could you build in a year?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** About 120, 140 might be at capacity, but if there is money for a catch-up program, we'd have to mobilize the communities to make sure everything falls in line. We're planning to have a summit in the spring to look into those issues.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** My colleague Mr. Braid was talking about investments in the north, and we did talk about the harbour investment. I think he suggested Mr. Ricard could provide us with some other types of investments that have been beneficial to Nunavik.

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** Sure.

•(1015)

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Do you have any information?

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** Not here right now, but yes, we can certainly look into this. Let me do a little bit of research on this so I can tell you.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** And then you can provide that to the committee?

**Mr. Daniel Ricard:** Yes.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Most of the infrastructure in the north comes from the Quebec government and the federal government. We have the airports. Kuujuaq Airport is a federal airport.

**A voice:** That was renovated just recently.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Not renovated. A new building was recently built.

Kuujuaq Airport is the transportation hub for the region and provides other services to Nunavut as well.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Mr. Boughen.

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** Welcome, gentlemen. Let me add my welcome to that of my colleagues. It's good of you to come and share part of your day with us.

Looking at your housing situation, most grants we're aware of are from three dimensions: federal, provincial, and municipal. Are your communities structured that way? Are they part of the housing solution by supplying money for the housing to be built? Certainly house construction is an economic driver. What other economic drivers do you have in the communities that may develop some dollars toward the housing projects?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I haven't really thought of it in those terms, but from what we're hearing from Minister Strahl, they'd like us, Makivik Corporation in the northern region, to provide contributions toward the housing.

We had a meeting very recently on this issue. We're open to that. We're looking at that aspect of it.

**Mr. Ray Boughen:** What other economic drivers are in your communities—processing, manufacturing?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Eco-tourism and the outfitting camps provide a lot of money, not just for our region but for Quebec. I believe about \$11 million is injected into the province of Quebec just from that alone, from outfitting hunters coming from the States to go caribou hunting or fishing.

**Mr. Ray Boughen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wilfert, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to reinforce that the Quebec National Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution in late 2007 calling on Ottawa to include the region in the Arctic strategy.

The Inuit say that sovereignty begins at home. With that in mind, reinforcing Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic should obviously entail building up healthy regions or communities. These would obviously require a significant level of economic productivity, self-sufficiency, acceptable levels, trend lines, et cetera.

Can you comment on this notion—that sovereignty begins at home by dealing with healthy regions and communities—in terms of the kind of strategy you would see to assist your part of the country to be much more self-sufficient?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I'd like to give you an example of what happened in the 1950s in the Canadian Arctic. The Canadian government had a policy of trying to make Inuit into farmers. I'm not sure you're aware of this, but there were a whole lot of sheep and

chickens brought up north, and we had some Inuit who tended to these chickens and sheep. There must have been some pigs too.

This happened in many of the communities—not all of the communities, but in the centres that were becoming major centres. We have a person still alive in Kuujuaq whose name is Chicken Sam. That's not because he shies away from fights, but because he tended to those chickens. I'm bringing this up just to highlight the point that the Canadian government tried to bring into the Arctic—how would I say it?—an outside economy.

Going to your question, I think the land-based economy should be given more support. The people's ability to go hunting.... By the way, we pay taxes. We probably pay even more taxes than anybody else, because there's an extra transport cost on the groceries that come up north, and there are taxes levied on the transport costs too.

To go hunting—I'll give you the example of the snowmobile—is very expensive, as you probably know, but an elder or an Inuk hunter requires that machine to go hunting to provide food for the family. If at all possible, we'd like to see taxes not being charged on snowmobiles, for example, for the north, because they are a big contributor to the local Inuit economy. They provide a lot of food for the families. That's one point.

• (1020)

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** So looking at the tax regime would be helpful, in terms of developing this. I mentioned trend lines for basic social wellbeing. You won't get that unless you have such instruments as a different type of tax regime.

I think the comment that sovereignty begins at home really deals with this issue of helping communities not by trying to import strategies, but by trying to learn from the very people who are there. Maybe we need to do better listening and then take more action.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Exactly; that's the point I wanted to raise. Don't bring in farms, don't bring in the chickens and the sheep, but support those hunters who can provide for their families or support the tourism industry, for example.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** That way, you will build a much healthier community.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Yes.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** And also, people will take better ownership in the north.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Exactly.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** One of the things I've come to a conclusion about is that a coherent, whole approach rather than a sectoral or fragmented approach in dealing with these issues is much to be preferred. You have to be part of the solution and not be viewed as on the periphery.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Exactly. In the Canadian Arctic, community development is economic development. We have a small population base with a large land base, so that's what it ends up being.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Just to make a very quick comment, a number of aboriginal communities work with municipal governments in economic cooperation, in joint ventures, etc. Does this happen to any degree in your region?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Yes, it does with Inuit regions outside of Nunavik. Our municipality has sister communities, in Greenland as well as just outside Montreal. But there hasn't really been an economic impact from those.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gordon.

Now I will give the floor to Ms. Gallant.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll speak through you to the witnesses.

During your presentation you expressed concern about the security of our nation and its ability to take care of accidental situations such as, for example, the cruise liner scenario you described.

Whether we like it or not, we have nuclear-powered vessels transiting the Canadian Northwest Passage. My question to you is whether you feel that any deepwater port along the Arctic coast of Canada should be equipped to deal with the radioactive aspects of any accident involving one of those types of vessels.

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Most certainly it should. If those types of ships are going through the Arctic, that could be one of the mitigation measures. Maybe we should be more worried about the nuclear ships, but we're even worried about oil tankers—any ship. If there's an accident of any kind, oil is going to spread and destroy some habitat. We're not even at the point of discussing nuclear-powered ships; it's more the regular ships. If there's an accident, there's really no way for there to be a speedy cleanup. It would take too long to do those cleanups.

• (1025)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** The subs are already in the area. Are there tankers using the area that you're aware of?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** I don't think there are tankers, but every ship has to have fuel to run, so any accident would be magnified, since the response time would take too long and would not be very...

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** The preservation of the environment, then, far exceeds any potential for economic development through commercialization of the Canadian Northwest Passage?

**Mr. Michael Gordon:** Yes. Many of our people still live not off the land but from the land and its resources: the animals, the game, and the fish. Any time there's an accident with the waters or the land, it's going to impact the wildlife. That's really close to the heart of what people feel up north.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I want to thank all our witnesses

[*Translation*]

for having taken part in our study on Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic.

Thank you very much, Mr. Ricard.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Gordon. We appreciate your presence here. Your testimony will be very useful for our future work.

[*Translation*]

Thank you everyone.

The 38th meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence is now adjourned.

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