

Speech by Premier Eva Aariak

on the

Federal investment of \$100 million for Nunavut Housing

February 19, 2009

Lobby of the Legislature, Iqaluit

Thank you, Stephane.

Minister Strahl, Minister Aglukkaq, I am very pleased you are here to join us today.

On the day of US President Barack Obama's first international visit, and his first visit to Canada, it is significant that our Member of Parliament, Minister Leona Aglukkaq, and our federal Minister responsible for the North, Minister Strahl, are here, in Nunavut, in Canada's Arctic. Your visit tells Nunavummiut again that Canada is serious about the North.

Your presence here demonstrates to the US and to the world, that Nunavut is a part of Canada's sovereign Arctic, that our lands and waters are Canadian. More importantly for me, it is Canada's investment in the people of Nunavut that demonstrates real commitment to a viable North, and to Canada's Arctic Sovereignty.

There are no dots or lines on the lands, waters and ice of the North. Canada's strongest claim to the North is in the unbroken use and occupation of this territory by Inuit for millenia. It is our residents who embody sovereignty.

Don't forget, it was residents of Grise Fiord in the high Arctic who first realized Florin Fodor was trying to sneak into Canada via Greenland. And, residents of Cambridge Bay, to the west, asserted Canadian sovereignty over the Northwest Passage when the Norwegian sailors failed to report to Canadian officials.

To continue living here, Nunavummiut need sustainable, vibrant communities. We need opportunities for employment, education and training. We need to raise our families in adequate and suitable homes. And, we need options for building a future for ourselves, our children and grandchildren.

Investing in new home construction across the territory does exactly this.

Building homes across Nunavummiut will improve the quality of life for Nunavummiut. It will create new, good jobs in our communities, foster skills development, and reduce overcrowding. Our children will have better places to sleep and study. Improved educational and health outcomes will follow. Our people will have homes that are better suited for the North, with greater energy efficiency, and with design features that incorporate Inuit culture and values. We will see healthier families and communities. Our apprentices will gain valuable work experience, a necessary step towards good jobs and self-reliance. Our businesses will be sheltered from the global economic crisis.

In turn, we'll contribute to stabilizing the southern economy, as more than 50 cents on every dollar will go to back south to the provinces' economies, in purchasing construction goods and services.

Minister Strahl, Minister Aglukkaq, thank you for being here today and for investing in Nunavummiut. By working together, we will improve the quality of life of Nunavummiut, protect our businesses, create jobs, and put a human dimension to the term "Arctic Sovereignty".

Thank you