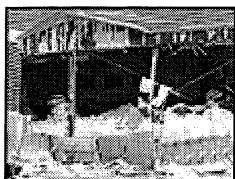


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Bouchard calls for inquiry into avalanche tragedy

WebPosted Tue Jan 5 01:40:01 1999

KANGIQSUALUJJUAQ, QUEBEC - Premier Lucien Bouchard has called for an inquiry into the avalanche that killed four adults and five children in an Inuit village of northern Quebec.

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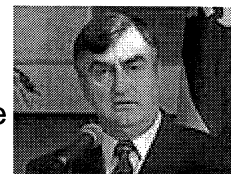
Bouchard also said any inquiry into the tragedy will focus on a 1995 report by avalanche experts that mentioned previous avalanches earlier in the 1990s.

The report said the school was not in danger, but recommended that steps be taken to reduce avalanche risks. One of the recommendations was for a steel retaining wall and closing the lane behind the school in winter.

1995 report
called for
lessening
avalanche
risks

The Royal Bank of Canada in Iqaluit told CBC News Online that a Kangiqsualujjuaq Disaster Fund has been established. Donations can be made with the Royal Bank by calling (867) 979-5344.

Bouchard arrived in Kangiqsualujjuaq Sunday and told the grief-stricken community: "There's a lot of sadness. These are people who are already put to the test. Life isn't easy for them and with this happening, it's terrible."



Quebec Premier
Lucien Bouchard

A planned funeral for the nine people killed has been postponed until at least Tuesday. The funeral was scheduled for Monday, but bad weather has delayed the service.



The funeral will not be held in the church. It is one of the buildings ordered evacuated because of



Rescuers dig for survivors

fears of another avalanche.

Prime Minister Jean Chretien sent his condolences to the families of those killed. A spokesman for the prime minister's office says he will attend the service, whenever plans are finalized.

Bouchard spent the day visiting the local hospital and seeing for himself where the accident happened. The school was built near the side of a hill. Residents had questioned the safety of the decision.

Avalanche experts have also arrived. They will examine the range of hills near the site of the tragedy and determine if there is any further danger to the community. Ten more buildings have been evacuated because of a potential threat.

Nine people, including five children, died during celebrations to mark the changing of the year. Twenty-five others were injured, some seriously, when the wall of snow crashed down a 365-metre cliff into the side of the school where the party was taking place.

Rescuers dug for hours, trying to find those trapped under the tonnes of snow.

On Sunday a coroner examined the bodies of the victims and concluded autopsies were not needed. A spokesman for the Quebec Provincial Police, Francois Dore, said they died from suffocation or broken necks. "He talked to me about broken necks and fractures of the cervical bone. He told me some of them were killed by suffocation and compression," said Dore.

Kangisualujjuaq is a community of 650 people, 1,500 kilometres north of Montreal.



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