

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 004

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Thursday, April 6, 2006

Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for the history lesson on the Liberal Party of the last 13 years. The Liberals certainly did reduce the deficit, but they created a human deficit.

Right now, with this new throne speech, I do not think we not see much hope of changing that deficit, a deficit that denies Canadians productivity in their own lives, that denies Canadians and their children the opportunity to move past the problems they may have within their own living.

If the corporate tax rate that was in place before the Liberals got in had been in place today, there would have been an extra \$60 billion raised by the government. This year, the corporations have put only \$20 billion of that back into the economy in investment. There is a real loss to our economy.

What does the member think of the tax position of this throne speech? Is it going to change any of the things he and his party did for Canadians during their 13 years of government?

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 006

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Monday, April 10, 2006

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, and of the amendment as amended.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, in the presentation of my hon. colleague from Yukon I noted with some interest some of the issues he has raised in terms of the development of a northern strategy. This strategy was put forward to the territorial leaders and to the people of the territory as an answer, as a vision. In my territory, it then turned into a sum of money, some \$40 million.

That sum of money was then turned over to the territorial government. It did not find an answer for it either. It simply turned the money over to the communities to do with as they saw fit, so the Liberal support for the north and for a strategy there was somewhat limited. I would hope that in this Parliament we can put together a strategy for the north that will work, that will have some impact on the many serious issues facing the north, issues that really and truly need the attention of the House and Canada.

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 007

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Tuesday, April 11, 2006

Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply

The House resumed from April 10 consideration of the motion, as amended, for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I too wish to congratulate you on your acceptance of the Deputy Speaker position.

The member spoke about development of infrastructure programs, but he missed one. Although it is not directly related to the federal government, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities green fund is very important. I had the opportunity to sit on that fund for five years. We invested innovatively in infrastructure to achieve green results across the country.

We need to invest in our country in ways that can lead us to a greener future. Investments that simply mimic growth, that do not use the best available technology, that do not move the country forward in ways that are useful to the greater good of the

environment and for the citizens of the future are infrastructure investments that are not worthwhile.

Would the member agree that the importance of infrastructure investment toward improving our green future is something the government should take very strongly in the next while?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member indicated that the GST cut this government has proposed will benefit all Canadians. This statement needs some clarification.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recently released a report that shows that the benefits from this tax were extremely skewed for upper income Canadians. Some 48% of families in Canada have incomes of \$40,000 or less. The average take for these families from the Conservative cut will be less than \$120. On the other hand, the top 5% of families earning \$150,000 will average almost \$1,000 in tax benefits.

Does the hon. member, who quite obviously fits into the \$150,000 bracket, feel that he is representing all his constituents when he supports this government on this particular tax measure?

....

Ekati Diamond Mine

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election.

I rise on an issue of immediate importance to my constituents: the strike by the members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada workers at BHP Billiton's Ekati diamond mine. These 400 workers are fighting for the basic Canadian labour standards of seniority, pay equity and fair wages in their first contract with this huge multinational corporation.

BHP Billiton has responded with delaying tactics and by continuing to make contract proposals that have been rejected time and again by the workers.

I have been informed that BHP Billiton, a multinational with profits in the billions last year, has said it will continue to operate using private contractors who are not part of the union. This decision could lead to a long and difficult dispute.

The people of the Northwest Territories want to see this dispute resolved quickly but fairly. By and large, northerners get very little from the exploitation of their resources, other than some jobs and business opportunities. Northern workers put up with harsh conditions and long absences from their families in order to work at these mines. It is only right that they be treated fairly by their employers.

Because the non-renewable resources of the Northwest Territories are controlled by the government, these workers are regulated under the federal labour code. I ask both the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Minister of Human Resources to take an active interest--

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The Speaker:

The hon. member for Niagara West--Glanbrook.

* * *

....

Resumption of debate on Address in Reply

The House resumed consideration of the motion as amended, for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I am looking for the minister's direction in terms of the need for the northern territories to receive better than per capita funding for health care. When it comes to wait times and making health care more available to people, then of course there are also higher costs with that.

How is the minister going to approach this issue with the northern territories?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Trinity—Spadina.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of the Western Arctic who provided me with the honour and privilege of representing them in the House.

My riding, unlike most, represents a complete Canadian jurisdiction, the Northwest Territories. With an area of over 1.3 million square kilometres, the riding is the second largest in the country. It is home to Canada's pristine river, the Mackenzie River or, as the Dene say, the Deh Cho. The Mackenzie drains much of western Canada into the Arctic Ocean and is the key geographic feature of this vast land.

The people of the Northwest Territories are as varied as the great land they live in. The over 40,000 people who call the Northwest Territories their home include Chipewyan, Cree, Tlicho, Slavey, Gwitch'in, Inuvialuit and Métis, as well as Canadians from all parts of the country and newcomers from all parts of the globe.

These people live side by side, working and playing together to build homes for themselves and their children. It is the diversity of culture that is one of the strengths of the Northwest Territories. We are small in number but strong in heart and we truly represent Canada.

The human history of the Northwest Territories stretches back thousands of years, starting with the Dene who lived in harmony with the land for generations before the first non-aboriginal people arrived.

The Northwest Territories became part of Canada in 1870. It took on its present shape in 1999 following the creation of Nunavut.

The future for the Northwest Territories has the potential for greatness. It is blessed with an abundance of natural resources which, if developed in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner, will add much to Canada's economy.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister made many references to the importance of the north to Canada and yet I was surprised and disappointed that there was not one mention of Canada's north in the opening address. It seems that once again we have a government that is all talk and no action. The people of the north have already suffered from 12 years of that style of government under the Liberals. Are they to continue suffering?

The people of my riding have a long list of issues that for too long have either been ignored by the federal government or, when it has addressed these issues, the government takes care of its own interests first rather than those of northerners.

Many members of the House may not be aware that the powers of the three territories are delegated from Ottawa rather than entrenched in the Constitution. It is this

Parliament that determines what northerners may have control over. Because of this, Parliament has a fiduciary responsibility to the people of the Northwest Territories as well as to those who live in the Yukon and Nunavut. Northerners are tired of living under a colonial regime that, like all colonial regimes, robs the colony and serves its own interests.

The people of the Northwest Territories need action from the government on their political development. As I mentioned, the law outlining the authorities of the Government of the Northwest Territories is outdated but this is just the tip of the iceberg. For too many years the federal government has dragged its heels in the negotiation of self-government and land claims. Further, for those claims that have been settled, Ottawa has failed to properly implement them.

Until Ottawa settles all outstanding claims, truly recognizes the inherent right to aboriginal self-government and the charter right of public government, the political development of the Northwest Territories will remain stagnant.

After the lack of strategic direction provided by the federal government in the development of our diamonds, northerners are concerned about how future resource development will be handled by the federal government. We are all aware of the ongoing hearings into the Mackenzie Valley natural gas pipeline. The process is taking too narrow a focus on the scope and impact of the development. What is needed here is a strategic environmental assessment of all the development that will flow from a major gas industry in the Mackenzie Valley.

One of the key pieces of legislation here is the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. This federal legislation places almost all of the control of the Northwest Territories' vast natural resources in the hands of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development with only non-binding advice from appointed representatives of aboriginal claims groups and common citizens of the Northwest Territories. This process under the Liberals has meant that the resource management decisions have been made with the interests of Ottawa put ahead of those of the Northwest Territories.

(1750)

The result has been that the vast resources of the north, be they mineral, oil and gas, have been given away to multinational corporations by the federal government, by anybody's standards, at fire sale prices. To add insult to injury, even at these cut rate royalties the government, according to the public accounts, earned over \$270 million in the 2004-05 fiscal year from the NWT's resources while the people of the Northwest Territories only earned \$3.5 million. I dare any member of the House, especially those from Alberta, to call this fair.

The Northwest Territories needs a fair financing agreement with Canada. Right now the federal government claws back nearly every cent that the Northwest Territories raises. This means that the economic development of the Northwest Territories benefits my constituency very little. There are increased costs due to economic development but without the benefit of increased revenue from this development the reality is increasing funding shortfalls for essential programs such as education, health care, municipal infrastructure and social housing.

I also call on the Minister of Finance to fund the north based upon the real cost of programs and service delivery. Due to the north's small population and vast distances between communities, per capita funding comes nowhere near meeting those real costs.

The Prime Minister talks about the fiscal imbalance. A per capita approach to funding for the north will not solve our fiscal imbalance. For years the Northwest Territories has been calling on Ottawa to lift the arbitrary borrowing limit of \$300 million placed on the Government of the Northwest Territories. To quote our finance minister during this year's budget speech, "reflects an outdated and unreasonable view that we cannot make sound financial decisions on our own".

The Northwest Territories wants nothing more than a fair shake when it comes to financing from Ottawa. There should be one objective when discussing financing with the

Northwest Territories and that is to ensure that the people of the north receive the same level of government service programs that other Canadians receive.

Another issue that my constituents would like to see some action on by the federal government is helping them deal with the high cost of living in the north. In the late 1980s the last Conservative government brought in the northern residents tax deduction to help northerners offset the high cost of essentials such as food, housing, fuel and transportation. Set at a maximum of \$15 per day, this deduction has not changed in 18 years.

I call upon the Conservative finance minister to do what his Liberal predecessor would not: increase the residency portion of the northern residents tax deduction by 50% and to index the deduction to the consumer price index for the north.

Another issue that the people of the north want addressed by Ottawa is climate change. While the government says that we need to rework our commitment to climate change, the people of the north will suffer. The effects of our warming planet are already being felt in the north. Many experts believe the decline of the caribou numbers, as well as other animals such as polar bears, are directly related to climate change. In addition, record high temperatures endanger the boreal forest as well as communities along the Beaufort Sea where rising sea levels and increased storms are devastating the coastline.

The people of the north cannot wait while the environment minister reworks Canada's commitment to greenhouse gas reductions in order to suit the needs of large corporations. Action is needed now.

Canada's north is an integral part of this nation's cultural identity. In the coming years it will become vital to this nation's economy through the supply of natural resources. As the Prime Minister noted so many times during the election campaign, the north is an important part of Canada's sovereignty.

However it is time the federal government realizes that northerners are Canadians with interests that must be respected. The north is not Canada's colony and it is time the federal government stopped acting as if it were. It is time the federal government realized that Canadians' love of our land, our status as equals and our concerns for the future of our children and grandchildren stretch from sea to sea to sea.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, yes, the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline is an important issue and, as I mentioned in my speech, we need to address it as a gas industry.

The problem we have with many of the environmental processes and assessments that have gone on in the past is that governments have tended to take projects in isolation from the likely results of their future development.

When we look at a project like that, we need to look at it in the context of what it will create for us in the Mackenzie Valley and how we can best judge the impacts of the full project and the full development of this rather larger gas industry with estimates about a third of the total reserve that Alberta had when it started out?

I fought three elections saying that the concept of developing northern gas for Canadians is a good idea but of course we need to have projects that work for ourselves. The purpose of my speech today was to point out the necessity for northerners to be listened to on projects such as the Mackenzie Valley project.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, climate change is an issue that will come on like a gangbuster in the next while. We cannot stop the forces of nature with bricks and mortar. On the Arctic coast, people in the community of Tuktoyaktuk have for years been putting in brick rip-rap to prevent the erosion of their community but that is not working because the forces of nature are stronger.

When we see the rising of the sea and the increased storms that occur at times of the year, these are things that drive a change in climate. The effect on the animals, the birds and the feeding grounds in the Arctic as well from these rising sea levels and from these increased storms is very significant.

There is much scientific work going on right now to determine the true impact on our migratory bird populations.

....

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Friday, April 28, 2006

International Bridges and Tunnels Act

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Transportation concerns environmental issues and the concerns many residents along the border have with the movement of hazardous goods through tunnels and bridges. As the rate of rail movement has increased in Canada we have seen incidences where these environmental concerns have turned into environmental problems.

Does the bill bring clarification to the direction that we will take with the development of new facilities and with the movement of hazardous goods within those facilities?

....

Natural Resources

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about an important issue in my constituency in the north.

Today the Mackenzie gas pipeline is in front of two federal assessment panels. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development met with leaders from the Northwest Territories last week and indicated that his government was willing to support this project without the unanimous approval of northern aboriginal leaders and the results of the two assessment panels.

How can the minister take such a stand before the assessments have been completed and aboriginal leaders have had their input?

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Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development are very interested in providing economic development to the north. Clearly, we are interested in receiving unanimity, if possible, but we are not going to let that be a barrier to providing economic value to the northerners that need it the most.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, there is so much the minister can do for our communities, for the working families, and for aboriginal people. We need to work with all people to prepare the ground for such an important project.

The minister needs to take immediate action to deal with the Deh Cho land claims, financing the protected areas strategy, supporting land use plans, negotiating resource revenue sharing, and establishing a cumulative environmental impact assessment process.

Will the minister commit to work with the people of the north on these issues immediately?

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Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has committed to the people of the north including the Deh Cho. In fact, his first trip was throughout the north. He met with these groups and he has ensured all parties that he is going to be working with all stakeholders to provide the best solution to this situation.

* * *

....

International Bridges and Tunnels Act

The House resumed consideration of the motion that BillC-3, An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to express my congratulations to my colleague for his speech. I am interested in the issue surrounding the ability of the federal government to make decisions that can impact many of these communities. As a former mayor and someone who has been involved in municipal decision making throughout much of my career, I am always concerned when we see opportunities for people at the community level to lose some of the control they have over their lands and their way of life.

Within any aspect of this, and this may apply in Windsor as well as many other places in the country, we need to be always cognizant that municipal governments are close to the people. They understand what the people want. They understand the conditions of the communities and the surrounding areas. If we are going to put in legislation that takes those issues away, I want to know what my colleague thinks about it.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, my colleague has worked in the auto industry and understands it very well. I am interested in a couple of issues with respect to the direction the government is taking. When a government invests in infrastructure, it is investing in the future. It is investing in transportation. Right now, 40% of Canada's exports are moved by rail which is by far the preferred environmental transportation link. With improved scheduling, rail can compete well with trucks on the highway.

Does my colleague think there is a philosophy at work here about the way we should go with our transportation? CN Rail is now established right across North America with excellent connections. We are building rail as an energy efficient and useful form of freighting that should be expanded.

Does my colleague think there are opportunities in the Windsor region to look at improving the rail system versus improving the road system, if there is a long term philosophy of greening this country?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and speak to the House on Bill C-3. It is an honour to be able to provide information to the House about issues as vast as the ones on the legislative agenda of this Parliament.

I want to start off by saying that I think my colleague from the Conservative Party was rather truthful when he said that the Prime Minister had provided leadership on the softwood lumber issue. However, the question is: What kind of leadership did he provide?

We have a free trade agreement and various portions of that agreement have dispute mechanisms for a number of different items. However, with regard to the softwood lumber deal, I think it is the first time we have capitulated to an environmental beef by the Government of the United States by telling the Americans that they can set standards for us in Canada. As an environmentalist, that is an interesting turn of events and that is interesting leadership that has been provided by the Prime Minister in his very short time in his position.

When we think of the environment let us take the hog farms of North America. Hog farms pollute the rivers to an incredible degree. They use a provision many times and call themselves farms. They get the same rights as farmers in the United States to put their silage into the environment. That silage from 100,000 hogs is equivalent to the manure from a city of a million people and they are sticking it in rivers and such in the United States. Does that mean that Canada can now put punitive tariffs on bacon from the United States? Does that mean that we have better environmental standards so we are going to go over there and deal with them in that fashion? I would say that would be the kind of leadership that I would be looking for from the Prime Minister.

Leadership is what one makes of it. The leadership that has been provided by the Prime Minister on this issue is a sellout. It is a sellout to many people in this country. It is a sellout to industries that have set up and are running in a certain fashion and trying to remain competitive with their U.S. counterparts. They have been encouraged to follow a certain direction by our governments and now we have cut the rug out from underneath them.

I will now get back to the position of this bill. One of the things the bill talks about is a streamlined approval process for bridges, tunnels and those sorts of things that cross the border. As I said earlier, I am concerned about what local people have to deal with when a federal government has the responsibility and the authority to put new transportation systems, new linkages, in through their particular part of the country. A streamlined approval process suggests to me, coming from a region of the country, the Northwest Territories, where the federal government does most of the approval processes for all development, that somebody will be ignored and somebody's concerns will be relegated to the dustbin and we will not have a proper process.

(1415)

When the federal government initiates projects, when it owns projects and when it has a streamlined approval process, we have to be very careful with what goes on. We have to be careful for the people who live in the regions where the federal government will be working. When we put all those powers, authorities, interests and ownership in the hands of the federal government and then it says it will streamline the process of approval, we know the people in the communities will suffer. It is extremely important that we give people in communities the opportunity to be consulted clearly and effectively, with proper resources, where they can make the case for the issues they think are important, when something like a new highway or bridge cuts across their lands, or when there is a change in direction of transportation requirement, or when new roads, or bridges or tunnels are built in a community where there had been none before.

Those are issues I am aware of in the north.

We are facing the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. I addressed this earlier today. We have a minister who has said to us that the government is in favour of it. However, the minister is responsible for the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, one of the very acts that decides the details, the direction and the ultimate approval for the pipeline. We are in an environmental assessment process right now. A panel is sitting, supposedly making judgments for all of us, and the minister has already decided the government supports that project. Where does that leave us?

That is an active example of how important it is when the federal government has control over projects, that we have not streamlined approval projects, but a meaningful and consultative process that can drive correct solutions, that can leave people on the ground comfortable with what has happened to them.

We need to promote rail transportation for the future of our country. It is an excellent way of transportation. We need to improve rail corridors. We need to put money into the things that will allow the rail system to move more effectively, that will attract back not only freight but passenger traffic, which will make a system that works for Canadians. Prices of energy keeps up and congestion is a matter of fact for many of the people who live in the areas along the Canada-U.S. border.

We have policy challenges with the border such as the western hemisphere travel initiative which will require all Canadian and American travellers to have passports to travel to and from the United States. Once again, we see leadership of our Prime Minister on this matter. That leadership is taking us in a certain direction and that direction can be difficult for all Canadians as well as Americans.

(1420)

Canadians standing up to ensure reasonable access at our borders will help Americans as well. This is something we should not give up. We have a vested interest with the great country to the south to maintain a civil approach at the borders and to maintain the opportunities for Canadians and Americans to share a common border and use it effectively in their daily lives.

This is something we share and we need to make the point to the United States that we can work with them on this and make it happen. However, let us not accept a knee-jerk reaction to terrorist incidents to upset the direction that these countries have worked on for so long.

I travel to other places in the world such as Europe where people can leave their passports in their pockets because they do not need them. They can walk across borders and that is okay. People understand how to live together and we need to do that between our two great countries. That is the way we have to go. The authoritarian regime in the United States right now will pass. We will have an opportunity to deal with people who are more logical and reasonable. Let us encourage our leadership to recognize and respect that.

I know I am running out of time on this opportunity to speak to the bill, but I am sure other points will be raised by other people.

The New Democratic Party supports this effort. We would like to see more from the old Bill C-44 brought forward. If that is something the Minister of Transport is planning to do in the future, I think he will see a lot of support in this party to see more effort on this front. At the same time amendments are required for this bill. We look forward to it going to committee.

As always, everyone can be sure that New Democrats are here to make this Parliament and legislation work. We can work together. We can make better legislation for Canadians. We can sometimes throw out rhetoric, but it does not mean we cannot be critical. We can have criticism without being rhetorical. I would like to see us all work toward that because this is a Parliament of ideas and direction for the whole country. It has been a great opportunity to speak here today.

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Monday, May 1, 2006

International Bridges and Tunnels Act

The House resumed from April 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today, on May Day, to have the opportunity to speak in this House on a day that is so significant to working people around the world. I certainly want to make that point.

With regard to Bill C-3, I really do not have too much to carry on with. I would like to re-emphasize the point I was making on Friday in regard to rail transport and the need to ensure that the investments we are making in infrastructure are the correct ones for the future. When this government proposes to legislate and control the development and repair of infrastructure and the direction we take with international trade across our borders, and when we look at the qualities for the future that rail transport offers to freight in terms of the environment, security, the movement of goods across the border, and the ability to provide a clean, effective system that is less intrusive on the communities it will travel through, I think we need to look very closely at rail transport and its future in this country.

When we come to making decisions about upgrading or installing new bridges, which would be designed for improving truck transport and vehicle transport across the border, I would put my order in for the provision of greater opportunities for rail transport in this country. That is the one issue I wanted to highlight here today. I have no further comments. I now will leave this for questions.

....

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Tuesday, May 2, 2006

Public Health Agency of Canada Act

The House resumed from May 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act respecting the establishment of the Public Health Agency of Canada and amending certain Acts, be now read the second time and referred to committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, coming from the north, as I do, and being familiar with the conditions of health care in the northern regions, it is an overriding concern that crosses the country. In many cases, people in small communities and on reserves face very difficult health conditions and very limited resources to deal with them.

Having said that, I am interested in the Public Health Agency as a federal responsibility and how it will work. In our perusal of the legislation, it seems to indicate that the chief health officer would not have jurisdiction over aboriginal reserves or perhaps even over self-government arrangements that are constitutionally given through the federal government.

How does the member see the bill improving the life of aboriginal people on and off reserves? The chief health officer represents a very significant service that one would receive if one were under provincial jurisdiction. How does the member see that fitting with the federal responsibilities on reserves?

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 018

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Monday, May 8, 2006

The Budget

Financial Statement of Minister of Finance

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's address on the fiscal issues within the budget. My concern lies with something that probably the Liberals may find attractive in the budget, and that is the corporate tax cuts. We fought very hard in the previous Parliament to change that, and we did. I note with some degree of pleasure that the corporate tax revenues of \$29 billion in 2004 went up to \$34 billion last year. In effect, we have done pretty well under last year's NDP amendment on corporate tax cuts.

However, in this budget the personal income tax revenues will rise by 12% over two years and the corporate income tax revenues will only rise by about 6%. The budget represents another extraordinary change in the relationship between those two revenue sources. Does my hon. colleague consider this budget is being properly represented as a cut to personal income tax, or is it about cutting corporate income tax?

....

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Tuesday, May 9, 2006

The Budget

Financial Statement of Minister of Finance

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate my colleague on his speech. We have seen many efforts over the last number of days to draw attention to some of the cuts that are coming in the environment section in this budget period. My concern is that the government is taking a consumptive approach in its outline. It is anti-conservation in many ways. The

solutions that are being proposed are not the solutions that are going to really make a difference in this economy.

How does the member see this budget addressing those issues of conservation? How can the budget possibly make a difference to Canadians in that regard?

....

Financial Statement of Minister of Finance

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech. I want to talk more about the issue surrounding the cutting of energy conservation in homes. Right now we are facing a crisis in the natural gas industry in North America. Supplies are short. The Minister of Finance has said that he wants to go to Russia to find more supply for our homes in Quebec and Ontario. What we need right now is more investment in energy conservation, and we do not see it in the budget.

Will my colleague outline how this could be changed over the years ahead to make a better effort for Canadians under energy conservation?

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Thursday, May 11, 2006

Opposition Motion—Kyoto Protocol

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Ottawa Centre. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to speak on the issue of the Kyoto protocol and the accord that comes out of it. I have spent many years looking forward to the time when we will address greenhouse gas issues in an acceptable and bold fashion and will move forward on this.

The importance of Kyoto is really about what it meant to the world community when, in an organized fashion, we finally put forward a treaty that looked to reduce the consumption of the world's resources. One hundred and eighty countries bought into the concept of the need to conserve the earth, the need to conserve the resources that we have, to husband them, to use them effectively and to use them in a fashion that does not upset the ecosystem. That truly is a marvellous achievement in international politics. We cannot step back from that, we simply cannot.

I commend the motion made by the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, because everything that we can do helps, but in regard to the motion I have to say that we cannot let inter-jurisdictional wrangling delay action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This is a international issue, a global issue and an issue that in this country we have to deal with as a national issue.

I had the opportunity to sit on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' green municipal fund. This is really quite a good organization. That was one thing the Liberals did that was pretty good. It gave some money to another organization to organize a green effort. That speaks to the past government, but when it gave money to that other organization, the Parti Québécois would not allow the municipalities in Quebec to participate in the program. They missed the opportunity.

We had many wonderful projects from Quebec and what did we get out of them? We did not even get a chance to fund those projects. So we have to be careful with jurisdictional issues. We have to look at this holistically and in a forward thinking fashion, covering the whole of Canada and the world.

The heating of our planet will affect every human being. While jurisdictional issues must be considered, we cannot allow them to be a distraction from the real objective, which is to reduce the carbon dioxide that we are pouring into the atmosphere and that will change the earth for our children and our children's children.

I grew up and live in the north and I have seen the change in the north. The Mackenzie Valley is predicted to be the centre of the largest temperature increase in North America. That fact is on the ground already.

In Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic coast, shoreline erosion due to rising sea levels and much more violent storms that come from the greater heating of the earth and sky have forced people from their homes. They have seen parts of their communities washed away.

Animals throughout the north have been affected. Right now we are dealing with a crisis in caribou herds right across the whole country, including northern Quebec, because the change in climate affects animals first. They are the ones that live off the land. They are the ones whose breeding patterns change due to differing temperatures and inaccessible food supplies because of changes in climate.

(1720)

Across the north, winter roads, vital for the resupply of communities and mines, are melting earlier. This past winter large diamond mines in the Northwest Territories were impacted tremendously by the loss of the winter roads. There has been an increase in forest fires in our boreal forest. There has been an increase in pests throughout the forests of Canada, including the north where spruce budworm has killed many of our trees. Across the Mackenzie Valley, permafrost, thousands of years old, has been melting away. These are all indicators of climate change.

When good managers or wise people see indications of change or of something going wrong, they should look to fix it. The Liberal government saw indications of change, but did nothing to fix it. If I were a mechanic, I would say they put some engine additive in the machine of Canada and revved it up even higher. The Liberals hoped these problems would go away, but they did not. Now we have a Conservative government that is not going to take a hopeful approach. It is going to ignore these problems completely.

We see a change in attitude toward China and India. There is this attitude that the more advanced countries should move ahead on Kyoto and developing countries can catch up. We are demanding that these countries not follow in our footsteps, but lead us instead. I do not think that is correct.

We are in Afghanistan touting our democracy. We can beat our chest a bit about that. We have a House of Commons. We have all we need to be a democracy. Do we have the answer to Kyoto? Do we have the answer to greenhouse gas emissions so we can tell these other countries what to do? Canada should be leading on this issue.

The government does not have a plan other than to continue consumption. We just have to look at what has happened over the last number of years. We have ramped up production of oil and gas across the country in a remarkable fashion. In the mid-nineties, the Liberal government, along with the provincial Conservative government, gave huge tax breaks to the tar sands in Alberta when oil was \$12 a barrel. It is \$70 a barrel now. Those tax breaks are still there. The rampant development that is taking place there is hurting the whole community. People from Fort McMurray tell me they do not want this kind of development. They want an orderly development. Now we are a full freight train of development on the tar sands with very little return to the government. This is having a dilatory effect on the environment. We need to change some tax policies.

Natural gas is another matter. We used to have a 25 year reserve of natural gas for our communities, but we have ramped up its production to the point where we are now down to an eight year reserve. We are selling off our natural gas as quickly as possible. The Conservative government's approach is to send people over to Russia to set up contracts for liquefied natural gas. We can export our Kyoto problem over to Russia where it will use 40% of the energy involved to liquefy the natural gas and send it back over to Canada. That is not a solution for Canada or the world. That is just more consumption. We need a government that puts conservation and those values first.

We need to provide support to our communities. They are the base where conservation changes can be made. We need to put national economic instruments in place that can drive the development of renewable energy such as wind, solar power and biomass. Our wind energy industry has to survive with a Liberal stipend that is one-third of what it is in the United States. This is not the kind of support this fledgling industry needs.

(1725)

Solar is much left off. There is much to say here. We will not finish this Kyoto debate today. It will go on for quite a while in this Parliament.

I commend the work of the Bloc in bringing forward this resolution, but we will be back at this again.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we cannot simply look for band-aid solutions to deal with these problems. We need to take an active and bold interest in how we deal with energy across the whole country.

The fact that greenhouse gas emissions have gone up by an incredible percentage in Canada shows us that the problem will not be solved easily. We need to take bold action. We need to look at the energy supply industry first. Then we need to look at serious conservation efforts that can drive Canadians to reduce, reduce and reduce.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the forests of Canada and the impact that climate change has on them, we can see it quite readily. I do not think anyone in the House is turning his or her back on that. We need a forest strategy, a survival strategy in those forests, to take out the trees, to find ways we can use that in an effective fashion to build some local autonomy.

We have done so little on biomass in Canada. We could look to the Scandinavian countries where they use their forests with intensity and they have produced great results

from that. We could take a lesson from Finland on how to manage these forests and how to deal with these types of issues in the forest so we can turn this environmental disaster into something we can deal with in a reasonable fashion. That requires bold action, money and the efforts of the provinces and federal government working together.

....

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Thursday, May 18, 2006

Budget Implementation Act, 2006

The House resumed, from May 15, consideration of the motion that BillC-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that the question be now put.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member goes to the issues he raised around support in the budget for aboriginal people. He spoke about the Kelowna accord and the failure of those dollars to show up in a meaningful way in this budget.

Over the past many years we have seen a status quo or a decline in the standard of living and the opportunities aboriginal people have in our society.

Does the hon. member feel that the Kelowna accord, which would have delivered \$5 billion over a number of years, had adequate funding to deal with the large problems facing over one million of our citizens across the country? Maybe the hon. member could outline how he feels those dollars would have given aboriginal peoples across the country the opportunity for a better future.

....

Taxation

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, in the late 1980s the Mulroney government brought in the northern residents tax deduction. This was intended to deal with the high cost of living in the north and, when first introduced, did much to right the balance.

However, it has fallen behind. With continuously rising costs of living and 13 years of Liberal inaction, it no longer provides northerners across the country with the relief they

deserve. Since 1989 the consumer price index for Yellowknife has gone up by about 50% and is higher in smaller communities in the north.

I ask the government to raise the residency portion of the deduction by 50% and to further index increases so as to keep pace with the ever increasing costs. Recently the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories voted unanimously to ask Parliament to increase the deduction.

I ask the government to heed the voice of northerners and increase this deduction.

* * *

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Friday, May 19, 2006

Budget Implementation Act

The House resumed from May 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure for the first time in many years to have the opportunity on behalf of the Northwest Territories to raise a critical voice about a federal budget. My comments will focus on three areas: how the revenue is being generated, impacts on the north, and protection of the environment, or rather the lack thereof.

A long time in municipal politics has taught me to first look at the revenue sections of a budget. It is pretty clear where the Conservatives plan to get their money and that is out of the wallets of ordinary Canadians. A 2% reduction to the general corporate income tax rate, doing away with the federal capital tax and the elimination of the corporate surtax will do nothing to help more working families.

Corporations, unlike ordinary citizens, can pick and choose where they will file their taxes. For the past few years the provinces and territories have been competing with each other in a race to the bottom for the lowest corporate tax rates. The federal government should take the opportunity to raise revenues from corporations while the provinces are giving them all these breaks.

Thanks to the Liberals, Canada already has a corporate tax rate well below the United States. Also, the corporations here have the benefit of public health care for their employees, so it seems unlikely that further reductions will do much more to attract corporations to this country.

The Conservative corporate tax breaks are nothing more than a crass political move to win favour with large corporations while those neo-cons turn their backs on ordinary Canadians. If the Prime Minister and his finance minister really wanted to help their

constituents, they would have used the surplus found in the budget to deal with issues that matter to Canadians, such as health care, environmental improvement and post-secondary education.

Instead, the Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance decided to use the surplus contained in the budget to buy support from the largest corporations in Canada, in other words, to act like Liberals.

A further revenue concern I have with the budget is the cut to the GST. This ill thought out measure will also create turmoil in the way provincial sales taxes are dealt with. Once again, pressure will be on the less fortunate provinces with sales taxes to take up the tax room vacated by the GST cut.

As a northern MP, however, I must admit that the GST is a very unfair tax to people in remote communities across the country where the cost of living can run as high as 250% of that in southern Canada. The northern residents tax deduction was supposed to compensate for this, but the impact of this fixed amount of relief has been severely degraded by inflation over the 17 years since its inception.

With all the Prime Minister's talk about the importance of the north during the election, I had half expected to see a budget loaded with good things for the north. Apart from some urgently needed housing money, the Conservative budget does not provide anything that was not already promised by the Liberals.

First, there is reconfirmation of the \$500 million fund to deal with the impacts to the Northwest Territories communities by the construction of the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline. However, it is unfortunate that the fund has been tied to the project going ahead. If we wait until the project is going ahead, it will be too late to begin preparing for the impacts of the project. Funding is needed now to do the planning and preparation for mitigating the impacts of the pipeline's construction. Trying to put together the structures needed to deal with these impacts while they are occurring will cause them to never be efficient and effective.

It was also interesting to read this passage in the budget:

In order to mitigate the negative socio-economic costs of the project, and in light of the significant federal royalty revenues to be generated by the project, the Government of Canada will establish a \$500-million fund. It is rare that a passage causes me to do a double take, but this one really caught me. Do the Conservatives mean that royalties that should be going to the Northwest Territories in the first place will be used to provide for this fund? If that is the case, then once again we are being manipulated with our own money. Or does this passage mean the Northwest Territories will not be seeing resource revenue sharing and devolution for a long time?

I ask that because at the extremely low royalty rates set in place by the Liberals, it will take some time to make up half a billion dollars. As well, this royalty scheme in place on federal lands, established decades ago when oil and gas were relatively low priced, front loads all the tax and royalty breaks. It will be many years after project start-up before there are any revenues to speak of.

(1025)

Is this any way for the government to manage for northerners their resource base, which is so vital to the development of the region?

A lot more money will be required to prepare the pristine Mackenzie Valley with its numerous small communities for the impact of a \$500 billion gas industry, of which the pipeline is only the first step. A massive public works infrastructure fund, which should be funded from potential royalties, is absolutely required. Investment in infrastructure up front may see the significant reductions in project development costs, thus returning money to the public coffers.

On other northern funds in the budget, it was nice to see the finance minister understands the need for better housing in the north, but the approach the Conservatives have taken is, at best, a band-aid. A one time contribution of \$50 million seems generous, but what has not been publicized is that the NWT will have to match this amount.

The budgets of the territories are already stretched thin due to federal cuts and arbitrary borrowing limits. Now these governments have to come up with additional funds to access the housing money. Just where exactly does the Minister of Finance expect the

territorial governments to find the money? Mr. Speaker, I will tell you where they will find it; they will have to steal funding from other programs and services.

Finally, let me turn to how the budget deals with what is the most important issue facing all human beings, that of our changing climate. Dealing with Canada's commitment under Kyoto requires all of us to put conservation and energy efficiency first. The Conservatives, by name only, are firmly welded to the consumption bandwagon. The word "Kyoto" is not mentioned once in the budget. The words "greenhouse gas emissions" are only mentioned once and then only to give more funding to pulp and paper corporations to burn off their pollution to generate electricity. The words "climate change" appear only twice, both times to explain how funding to effective programs is being cut and shifted to a public transit tax benefit of dubious value.

This shows quite clearly that the government has no plan to deal with climate change. Without dollars, climate change plans announced by the government are nothing but window dressing. Without a major commitment to energy conservation, Canadians will suffer.

Canadians overwhelmingly want leadership from the federal government on the environment. Instead, we have a government that has become so focused on its few priorities it cannot see past its own nose, and a budget that buys votes today while selling out our future.

The Conservative plan for climate change is not made in Canada; it is made in the oil patch. It is a plan for increasing consumption of energy, which will do nothing but increase greenhouse gas emissions.

While a consumption based plan may be good for the Conservatives' buddies in the multinational oil companies, it is not good for the millions of Canadians who have to bear the full effect of climate change and the high cost of energy.

What was needed from the budget was a commitment to enhance and encourage the development of green energy sources. Instead of leaving huge tax breaks for the oil sands, the finance minister should have shifted the subsidies over to the green energy sector to encourage development there.

Once again, working Canadians are faced with a budget that places all the costs upon them, while those who could do more actually have an easier time.

The budget is nothing but a carny sideshow. It looks nice, it takes a poor family's money, but once we get past the elaborate facade, there is no substance.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, I do not really see much difference between Liberals and Conservatives when it comes to fiscal policy. While the Liberals were in power, we saw the corporate tax rate drop from 28% down to 21%. The Conservatives are going to put it down another couple of percentage points. This is giving up money.

There was a very interesting discussion about this in the newspaper a while back. An economist pointed out that this is costing our system an incredible amount of money right now and that money is not being reinvested by the corporations. The corporate tax cuts that we have seen over the years have degraded the ability of government to provide the kinds of services that my hon. colleague across the way spoke so highly of.

I think we were all ready to see a change of government. It is a minority government situation, just like the last time. We have seen that there are votes again. We are dealing with a Conservative government that really has a fiscal policy similar to the one the Liberals had before.

The NDP is the only party that has really different answers for Canadians. That is why I was very happy to see the election happen when it did. Canadians will work with the results of that election.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, my position and the position of this party is that we need to do away with the tax breaks that were instituted for the oil and gas industry, especially the oil sands in 1995 with the Liberal government under a previous leader, whom I will not mention, along with the Alberta government. Oil was \$12 a barrel and it is \$70 a barrel now. Those companies can stand on their own two feet. Why are we continuing to support them when there are perfectly valid green energy companies that could be providing great employment, great opportunities in Canada and need this kind of subsidy?

....

Natural Resources

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, EnerGuide is a program that makes economic sense. It saves homeowners, taxpayers and governments money. It reduces energy costs, energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Recently the Conservatives have been suggesting that 50% of the EnerGuide spending goes to administration.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell us if the government considers funding for homeowner energy audits as administration in its calculation?

[Translation]

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Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the minister is clear on the EnerGuide program. What is unacceptable is that only 50¢ of every dollar goes into the taxpayer's pocket, and that is what must be changed. We are conducting evaluations so that we can set up effective programs. That is what Canadians asked for.

(1200)

[English]

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, that makes no sense. Homeowners who get energy audits done is not administration. It is a feature of the program. Energy audits lead to renovations being done which stimulate the economy and which allows the federal government to recoup its investment. It is progressive because it helps low income families. The program should not be killed; it should be expanded.

We are getting the run around from the minister. Could the parliamentary secretary tell the House why the government is cooking the books on the EnerGuide?

[Translation]

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Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, what makes no sense is that only 50¢ of every dollar goes into the taxpayer's pocket. This has to be evaluated. That is the government's mandate. It will

take the time to do things properly instead of rushing to bring in programs that are ineffective.

* * *

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Wednesday, May 31, 2006

The Environment

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the government is doing nothing to tackle climate change in Canada and now we learn that the Minister of Finance has called for imports of one of the highest polluting forms of energy, liquefied natural gas, from Russia no less.

Could the minister explain how importing gas from Russia is part of the made in Canada solution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

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Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I think the member is referring to discussions at the G-7 meeting in Moscow in February where there was some discussion of negotiations and potential agreements between Petro-Canada and one of the Russian gas companies. Those are private negotiations between those entities.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the government is so confused. On the one hand it says that it is wrong to buy carbon credits overseas and, on the other hand, it says that it is okay to spend money overseas for one of the highest polluting forms of energies.

Could the minister tell us how importing liquefied natural gas from Russia will do anything to clean the air that Canadians are breathing or does the government just expect Canadians to buy the government's hot--

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The Speaker:

The hon. Minister of the Environment.

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Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, what will clean the air Canadians breathe is an investment in renewable fuels. Last week we had a historic meeting where all the territories and provinces came out in agreement that we need to move forward on a 5% target for biodiesel and ethanol. That is cleaning the air Canadians breathe.

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Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the government has abandoned Canadians to fend for themselves on climate change. For months now, the government has been proposing that Canada join

the Asia-Pacific partnership and that that organization be the focus of our climate change efforts.

On May 25 the United States Congress adopted a resolution terminating funding for AP6. In one stroke, fully 30% of the budget vanished. Why did our government abandon Kyoto and sign on to a partnership whose budget is slashed at a whim by the United States?

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Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the only party that abandoned the Kyoto protocol is the Liberal Party of Canada. It never put a plan in place, it never took any measures to reduce greenhouse gases to reach the target and now it is criticizing a partnership that includes four of our Kyoto partners in that partnership.

The hon. member might like to know that the former environment minister for the Liberal Party actually looked for membership in Asia-Pacific but, guess what, the party was not welcome.

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The Speaker:

The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. Minister of Finance and we will now hear from the minister.

* * *

....

Criminal Code

The House resumed from May 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conditional sentence of imprisonment) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill. I have a great deal of concern with the Conservatives' plan for getting rid of conditional sentencing for so many criminal offences, many of them not violent in nature. Many of them are of a kind that could be open to interpretation in the court as to their severity of impact on the general public.

Bill C-9 is what I call retail politics. The bill is a knee-jerk reaction. It will do nothing to rehabilitate criminals and it will not reduce crime. As far as we can see, it is based on not that much information. Not much information has been provided to the House to examine. In fact, due to the relatively recent introduction of conditional sentencing, there are few academic studies that have been completed on its impact on the criminal justice system. Furthermore, there is a dearth of sentencing statistics in Canada. Even Statistic Canada's adult criminal court survey lacks certain data. Therefore, we are not able to assess very correctly the nature of the impact of conditional sentencing on criminal justice.

In 2003 of the 104,000 sentences of custody imposed across Canada, 13,000 were conditional sentences of imprisonment. Of the people who were incarcerated or under supervision in 2003-04, four out of five were being supervised in communities. Many of them were on probation; 11% were on conditional sentences.

It has not been demonstrated to me nor to my caucus that this bill is going to work effectively to reduce crime or to improve the rehabilitation of criminals.

I come from the north. I have lived and worked in small northern aboriginal communities all my life. I worked in the municipal field as a mayor. For many years I had regular

correspondence with the police on the types of offences that were present in our communities. As a member of a small aboriginal community, I was able to see the impact of sentencing on individuals over a long period of time and the types of results that came from incarceration versus sentencing that allowed the criminal to stay in the community.

Canada's aboriginal population will be particularly hard hit by this amendment. We see the statistic in Saskatchewan where 60% of the conditional sentences that were handed down in one year were handed down to aboriginal people. Jails in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are already at peak capacity or overflowing and there is a very large percentage of aboriginal population in those jails.

Last year in Nunavut 200 offenders received conditional sentences and 275 were incarcerated. This is in a population base of about 28,000. One can see the impact that conditional sentencing will have on that small government and its ability to provide justice services to its people.

This month there were 73 prisoners packed into the Baffin Correctional Centre in Iqaluit, a jail designed to hold 40. At the start of this month, Yellowknife's North Slave Correctional Facility for adults, a new jail opened only two years ago, was full. Overflowing jails create environments which are dangerous to guards and inmates.

(1720)

Also, because these jails are full, northern inmates, many of whom are aboriginal, are being forced into jails in the south, where they do not have access to appropriate cultural rehabilitation programs. They are separated from their families which increases the likelihood that they will not be rehabilitated and will reoffend.

When we look at what is happening right now in the north, we see that in many cases judges and the correctional system want the inmates to remain in the north and not go to the southern institutions, even though they may have received sentences greater than two years. They know that the result of sending these inmates into the higher grade of correction services is they more likely will reoffend.

Is creating situations where offenders are not rehabilitated and continue to commit crimes after release what the Conservatives want? It seems to be, because simply putting more people in jail will only create environments which breed repeat offenders.

Justice is not about throwing people into jail for the purposes of revenge. It is about getting people to return to society and no longer commit crimes.

Canada's north has been at the forefront of developing alternative sentencing arrangements. Many of the communities in my riding have community justice committees that deal with many offences which would normally go before a judge. These committees know the offender and the community and craft sentences to meet the needs of both. Sometimes the committees hand out what would be considered to be light sentences for serious crimes, but the effect is that many of those sentenced through this process do not reoffend.

The committees, also known as sentencing circles, have been copied across the country as an effective means of reducing the level of aboriginal incarceration and reducing the incidence of reoffending.

Eliminating conditional sentences will have a major impact on aboriginal communities across Canada and the north in particular. Already aboriginal people make up a disproportionate percentage of prisoners in our jails. The bill will do nothing but add to that sorry figure.

For aboriginal people, conditional sentences sometimes work better than jail sentences. Recently a Nunavut crown prosecutor said that the reality is that for some people it is more difficult to serve a sentence in their own community than it is to be flown to a jail in Iqaluit, as the community gets to see the punishment.

In many small northern communities there are celebrations when people return from jail, but when they stay in the community, they are seen every day and are forced to deal with their actions with their peers.

In the north, conditional sentences also allow offenders to attend culturally appropriate treatment for problems such as addictions, anger management, mental problems, et cetera. Many of the people in our correctional institutions for very many crimes, and very

many violent crimes, likely suffer from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. In some situations people are being incarcerated where in a more tolerant society we would recognize the actual mental condition that leads to the result that we see.

Every person involved in the justice system will agree that each case before the courts is different and must be tried and sentenced on its own merit. The bill flies in the face of this well-known fact. In order to deal with this fact, judges must be allowed the tools necessary to craft sentences that are most likely to result in rehabilitation.

From their words, it is clear that the Conservatives do not trust the judges in this country. Unlike the United States where anybody who gets enough votes can be a judge, this country chooses its judges from the most respected and knowledgeable members of the legal profession. These people do not operate in a vacuum. They see the reality of the criminal justice system. We should allow those who know best to craft sentences that work best.

We should not deny people the tools that are required to do the job effectively. Why would we deny judges the tools that could make their work correct? Why would we want to do that? Is it just a sense of punishing individuals? Is it a sense of revenge, that the only way we can deal with justice is an eye for an eye?

Sometimes judges get it wrong, but there are mechanisms in place to deal with these mistakes. Crowns can appeal sentences when they feel the sentences are too light. Or if a person commits another crime while serving a conditional sentence, the punishment for that crime will be even more severe.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, the member's question is a difficult one. We want to ensure that the justice system is very fair. We want to ensure that cultural adaptation in the system is fair to the victims and to all those who have a part in the commission of offences and the subsequent delineation of their punishment.

I look for more weight being given to the judges because they are there to judge. They are there to interpret the law for the people in the communities. They interpret the law so that the people understand what the law is and that the return they get from the system is fair and adequate for every Canadian.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, we have not seen that side of the government's response to criminal justice. We have not seen the warm side of dealing with people in their environment to reduce crime and prevent crime from happening. We need youth centres all across the country. We need opportunities for young people to integrate into their communities and their societies comfortably.

To me, alienation from their community is one of the greatest causes of criminal activity for young people and once they are into criminal activity, it can lead them into more serious offences in the future. We need to work more with our young people. That requires money.

We have a real need for youth centres across the north. I have requests on my desk right now to work with people from Inuvik right through to Yellowknife along with smaller communities to get money into youth centres so that we can prevent some of this expensive criminal--

....

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Thursday, June 1, 2006

Opposition Motion—Gasoline Prices

[Business of Supply]

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I am supportive of the need to do something to counteract the negative impact that increasing gas prices are having on Canadians. Increasing fuel prices are a drag on our economy which, if allowed to continue, will show itself through increased prices in all sectors and possibly increased unemployment.

While all Canadians suffer from increasing energy prices, some feel the effects more than others. In the north, where energy costs are so high already, these things impact us more than others.

The other concern Canadians in northern and rural municipalities across the country have is with heating oil. As the price of oil goes up the price of heating oil goes up and that has a detrimental impact on Canadians.

However, these price increases are a symptom of a much larger disease. The disease is the fact that inexpensive, easy to access fossil fuels are beginning to run out at a time when demand continues to increase. While the Bloc's motion is a start, we must address the twin facts that new sources of energy need to be developed now and the demand for fossil fuels needs to be reduced.

What is needed is a national energy strategy that is based on the twin pillars of conservation and the development of new energy sources. I realize that some members of the House are frightened at the thought of this strategy as it brings back visions of the Liberals' failed national energy program. Even the CEOs of the large pipeline companies in Canada are calling for a national energy strategy.

Now is not the time to be timid. We must not let the failures of the past prevent us from effectively dealing with the fact that action is needed now.

What we have had is timid action. For example, a New Democratic initiative to require fuel efficiency in vehicles was defeated when both the Conservatives and the Liberals voted for voluntary standards which have failed to address energy costs, climate change and smog.

We have seen no action from the Conservative government because it has not realized that this issue is a priority with Canadians.

Before my time runs out I would like to put forward an amendment to the motion which would perhaps bring it in line so it can move forward. The amendment reads, that the motion be amended by adding the word "extraordinary" immediately before the word "profit" so that the section of the motion would read "a surtax on the extraordinary profits of".

* * *

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 037

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Friday, June 9, 2006

Criminal Code

The House resumed from June 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum penalties for offences involving firearms) and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I would like to understand the member's rationale in supporting Bill C-9 but now not supporting Bill C-10 when both of them deal with issues surrounding incarceration terms. Perhaps he could elaborate on how these bills are different and should be considered philosophically different.

....

Territorial Formula Financing

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Minister of Finance took delivery of a report on territorial formula financing produced by the expert panel mandated to review these programs. On Monday the minister said he was going to review the report.

The people of Canada's north need immediate changes to how their governments are financed.

Importantly, the report calls for a reduction in the amount Ottawa claws back from the territories' own source revenues each year. It also calls for resource revenues to be excluded from the calculation of own source revenues. I agree with these.

However, I cannot agree with the report's recommendation for the continuation of using population as the basis for determining territorial funding. In the submission from the three territories, they called this approach inadequate and inappropriate.

I hope the minister will heed the views of the three territories when he reviews this report. The territories are only asking for a fair shake from Ottawa that will allow them to achieve their great promise and potential in the development of this country.

* * *

....

The Environment

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, for over a year, Conservatives have claimed they have a plan to tackle climate change. Canadians and the NDP have been asking, where is the plan? For five months, nothing.

Yesterday the NDP launched the first part of its five point plan to a cleaner environment called the "Green Agenda for Canada". These are costed proposals that would reduce emissions and save working families money on their energy bills.

When will the government table its plan to help Canadians make their homes more efficient?

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, it is a good question and, as we have said many times in the House, we are developing a plan that is going to be effective and realistic.

I do not expect any support on plan building with the Liberals. For 13 years, they did absolutely nothing. However, we ask everyone else in the House to help us develop a plan that will be effective.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I wish the government would not blame the Liberals for the lack of their plan. Actions speak louder than words.

Homeowners need relief from soaring energy costs now. Our plan would save Canadians money, create 190,000 green jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 42 megatonnes. Our plan calls for housing retrofits, amendments to the national building code, mandatory ENERGY STAR compliance for household appliances and the reinstatement of the EnerGuide programs.

Could the government indicate exactly when Canadians will learn which of these proposals will be taken up by the government?

(1200)

[Translation]

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Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. All Canadians can agree that there has been an increase in greenhouse gas emissions due to the previous government's failure to take action.

We are a responsible government. We are reviewing programs precisely in order to keep our promises to Canadians and so as not to betray them, as they were betrayed for the past 13 years.

This is what it means to be a responsible government.

....

Extension of Sitting Hours

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we move ahead with the debate on Bill C-2, somewhat for selfish reasons. I work on my party's energy and environment file. I am concerned. The Conservatives plan to introduce work on a climate change plan in the fall. I do not want Bill C-2 to be hanging over our heads in the fall. I want it to be out of the way. I want us to move on. I do not want to have to listen to excuses from the government why it is not moving ahead on greenhouse gas emissions.

If I had my way, we could sit all summer if it meant getting a greenhouse gas reduction plan from the Conservative government which could serve Canadians and reduce the cost of energy for Canadians in their homes next winter. That would suit me better than going on the barbecue circuit throughout the country.

The issue of accountability has dogged this country for the last two years. I would like to know what the loss of productivity in the government has been through the problems that have come out, through the corruption that showed up in the Liberal Party over the last number of years.

We need to move on. The accountability act needs to be put in place. Parliament needs to resume its work on the more important issues that face Canadians rather than the issues faced inside the House. We need to get over those. We are elected to provide leadership. Leadership implies moral leadership as well.

I am proud that the NDP stood up in November last year and caused the demise of the Liberal government. I was proud of that. We made a move that needed to be done. I do not agree with all the things the current government is doing right now, but we needed to make that move. We needed to clean up the House of Commons. We needed to move on. Canadians needed to know that we were moving on. We have a chance to do that now before we break for the summer. Let us do it. Let us make the effort. Let us get it done.

I fully support the motion. I would urge the member to consider the importance of other legislation that he may want to see move forward in the fall session.

....

Rural Mail Delivery

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Oak Ridges—Markham, for his timely private member's motion. As a rookie MP in the House of Commons, I see that he has taken the opportunity to bring forward an issue that really does resonate right across the whole country. He focused it on his riding, but it fits the whole country and that is a very good thing to do.

I trust that we can move forward with this motion, with the support of the New Democratic Party and with the concurrence of the government. Of course, concurrence of the government does not mean that we are going to get the final results we are looking for and that was well pointed out by my colleague who spoke earlier.

There are many a slip twixt cup and lip when it comes to dealing with Canada Post, and getting some of kind of ruling and result in the end without considerable backsliding along the way. This motion is appropriate, but it is going to require follow up and attention from across the country to ensure that it works for people.

Last weekend I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. As deputy critic for rural and northern communities for the NDP, I attended the rural communities forum. Rural municipalities across the country have realized over

the last number of years that they need to get organized at a national level in order to get their voices out and issues on the table.

The FCM has organized, at the national level, the rural communities and it would be a very good place to extend this discussion, using its capacity to reach out to rural communities across the country, to understand if these problems are occurring all over the country and also to ensure that when the government instructs Canada Post to deal with the problems, we have a way of seeing that they are dealt with.

I would say that might be another avenue to take this issue at a date in the future. It has an executive committee as well that meets on a quarterly basis and could put forward this kind of information to the rest of its members. That is one way we might continue this to ensure that Canada Post not only deals with the issue but continues to deal with the issue and works satisfactorily on this issue across the whole country.

I represent northern communities and there are very few that have any kind of postal delivery. We all rely on postal boxes in central post offices in the smaller communities. Many of the communities are small in size and people routinely travel 20 to 30 kilometres a day or whenever they choose to do so to collect their mail.

There is no consistent standard of delivery across the country for all rural people that we could point to and say that is the way it is done for everyone. That is not the case and in many of these communities, of course, the burden is put on people to get their own mail at a central point. That is part of living in the north. People put up with these sorts of things.

In other ways other services have been given to us. The food mail system in the north is very important to people. They can get food delivered to them at a reasonable postal rate, but what they have found in a lot of the communities in the north is that the stores are taking advantage of the food mail delivery costs and not passing it on to the customer. That is a concern that northerners have with Canada Post, that it enforce the spirit of the food mail delivery system as well as the letter of the law.

(1415)

Canada Post must have the spirit to show that it wants to be that public service that we want it to be. Any time I hear that Canada Post should be even more privatized than it is already I shudder for our northern communities. It leaves me completely cold to think that would be the direction in which we would take that service, which has so many important attributes for isolated and rural communities across the country. We certainly do not want to see that.

I appreciate that the member has brought this matter forward in the form of his motion, which he was fortunate enough to have had drawn under private members' bills. All members wish we were in the top 10 of the lottery on private members' business but that does not always happen. I think I am at 208. I am unlikely to get into the top 10 unless the government turns out to be more conciliatory. We will all work on that over the summer. We will not be betting any money on the length of time the government stays in power. At the same time, the government should think about other members who have numbers in the triple digits and consider that we may want to bring forward motions such as this one in the future.

The New Democratic Party will support the motion but we want to ensure it works, that it does not get caught up in bureaucracy, that it does not get caught up in where the separation between Canada Post and the minister means that it could get watered down and the solution that does not work for everyone is implemented.

....

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 038

CONTENTS

Monday, June 12, 2006

Criminal Code

The House resumed from June 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum penalties for offences involving firearms) and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-10, a bill that is somewhat controversial here in the House and certainly within the New Democratic Party.

We support sending the bill to committee for potential amendments. In the election campaign we supported the idea of stronger mandatory minimum sentences for some offences. Part of our three pillar approach to crime is firm punishment and deterrence through legislation and regulation and much stronger sentencing provisions for crimes involving guns. There is some merit in Bill C-10 so we will assist in moving it forward to committee where we can look at it as a whole. One of my colleagues spoke to the hasty nature of this legislation and I do not doubt there are elements of that.

The NDP would like to see enhanced resources for enforcement combined with a political commitment to foster collaboration between various law enforcement agencies. This is another very important part of our approach to crime. We do not see this represented in Bill C-10.

The third pillar of our approach speaks to the overdue and essential investments in crime prevention, communities and youth. This is not represented in any way in the legislation. In committee we will be looking at whether the bill is worthwhile in its present form, whether it can be amended, and whether it should be made into law. In many ways there are restrictive elements in the bill. We have to be careful how we set up our laws.

In northern parts of the country someone may break into a cabin and take a firearm and use it for subsistence hunting not knowing that an offence has been committed and could be subject to three years in jail. Hunting is part of northern culture. In an urban area someone might break into a house to take something that is required to stay alive. This has to be taken into consideration when we are dealing with the north, the aboriginal and traditional communities across Canada.

Judges have to look at the facts of a case. We have to ensure that the laws will not send to jail people who do not need to be there. We have to ask whether putting people in jail will serve society. The precautionary principle works both ways. We do not want to put people into the criminal justice system who do not need to be there. Putting them in jail could lead them to reoffend after they are released. These are fine institutions of criminal learning that we have for jails across the country.

(1320)

These are important considerations. Precautionary principles work both ways in justice. In a lot of cases we have to give judges the room to judge the case on its merits. In some cases the law is quite straightforward. The possession of automatic weapons, handguns and assault rifles are not traditionally used for hunting or for any kind of peaceful purpose. They are not part of a peaceful society, the way long guns and shotguns are.

The NDP has no trouble supporting stronger mandatory minimums for those types of offences. They should not be around in peaceful society. They should not be used for illegal purposes in a peaceful society.

The NDP has already said it would support that part of the bill. We approached the Canadian people in that regard. I would want us to follow through on the policies that we presented in the election process. I encourage all parties to do the same.

There are many other things that Bill C-10 does not do. The bill does not address the 101 issues raised by the NDP in our crime platform. We consider them to be essential elements of any true programs for crime and punishment.

In this House, as in the last election campaign, there is not a lot of talk about how we could reduce and prevent crime. That is a tragedy. We have avoided the discussion of our drug laws. In many cases drugs are the prime drivers of violence and criminality in communities across the country. The new government has taken an even harder line than the last Parliament. This is a problem. This approach will not work for Canadians. It will not make our streets safer. It will not solve a problem we have been choosing to ignore for many years.

The NDP is supporting Bill C-10 at second reading so it will be sent to committee. What happens with the bill is very much up to the committee and the good work of the members involved there.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, our policy calls for mandatory minimum sentences on the use of handguns, assault rifles and automatic weapons, those firearms that have no place in a peaceful society. I come from a rural northern riding where firearms have a place in a peaceful society. They are a part of the everyday lifestyle of many people.

When I go into a small community like Fort McPherson and an elderly person hands me a letter he has received from the justice department stating that he has committed an offence because he has not registered his rifles, this elderly person is concerned. He does not see it as appropriate and I do not see it as appropriate that we have restricted the use of firearms through the registry, where we were trying to establish something that really was already there.

Interestingly enough, when the police talk about their statistics of how many times they use the gun registry every day, that same sort of behaviour would have been there when we used to have the firearms acquisition certificates. They also would have identified whether there were firearms in a particular home, as the police wanted to know. The question of whether one person has a certain number of firearms that are designed for peaceful purposes is sort of a moot point in most northern and rural communities. It is important to know who has firearms and that is a distinction.

Within this bill, the thought that we would be upping the penalty for people in possession of firearms that are used for the purposes of subsistence, such as hunting and those sorts of things, in my riding just would not wash.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, that is a good example of how the law does not apply but I am sure that when it comes to the enacting of a law such as this, there will be other examples where the life and death situation might not be so grave, and if a person breaks into a cabin it might be for some lesser purpose but still not a purpose for which we would want to put them in jail for three years.

It goes back to my main point, which is that in all of this we should let the judges judge the cases. We must be very careful when we are dealing with mandatory minimums and taking away conditional sentences, which is why the New Democratic position is pretty firm on the very selective use of mandatory minimums.

....

Northern Energy

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, northern Canadians face the highest energy costs in this country. One of the ways these costs can be reduced is to replace imported fossil fuels with renewable energy.

For example, the community of Wha Ti is developing a run of the river mini hydro project which, when completed, will eliminate the need for diesel-powered generators. This will reduce the energy costs to this community significantly, and for generations ahead.

NWT's diamond mines would benefit from the surplus electricity from the Talston River hydroelectric project, replacing polluting diesel fuel transported on ice roads.

In addition to small scale hydro, other forms of renewable energy being considered by northerners are wind, solar, biomass and wood pellets.

However, to realize these initiatives, northerners need the federal government to support them. That will allow these developments to occur. Such support will help northern residents reduce energy costs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build long term self-sufficiency.

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39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 048

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Tuesday, September 19, 2006

Canada Elections Act

The House resumed from September 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the issues that are raised by this bill and the direction it is going fundamentally speak to the nature of the political system we work in. This political system

has been characterized in the last while by minority governments, by a call by people for proportional representation.

The bill purports to set out a timeframe which really is not binding on the Governor General or the government of the time, but really we are all elected to govern here and the bill needs to be taken in that context. There is room for amendment here, to look at how we can ensure that the will of the people, expressed through their elected representatives, has an opportunity to work within a fixed timeframe.

Would the member opposite look at amendments that could ensure that others in the House, in a fixed period, would have the opportunity to form government in the case of a confidence vote in the House?

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 050

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Thursday, September 21, 2006

Canada Transportation Act

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I refer to new clause 5(b), which speaks to strategic public intervention, only if it is necessary, for socio-economic and environmental outcomes, but it does not reduce the inherent advantages of one transportation medium over the other.

I like what I have heard from the Bloc on the issues surrounding improving the environmental conduct of the railway. We have to look at road transportation as well. The idling of large semi-trailers is endemic across the western and northern parts of Canada. There are very viable cheap technological solutions to this. This question should be answered for all manner of transportation.

What is my colleague's point of view on this?

....

Emergency Management Act

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-12, An Act to provide for emergency management and to amend and repeal certain Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I note that my colleague talked about clause 5 and the relationship between Canada and the United States. He did not talk much about clause 6(2) which states:

Each minister shall include an emergency management plan

- (d) in the case of war or other armed conflict, the programs, arrangements or other measures that
 - (ii) support the Canadian Forces and the armed forces of Canada's allies in the conduct of military operations.
 - (iii) contribute to meeting Canada's military and civil wartime obligations to its allies...

My understanding is that this is a Liberal bill that has been brought forward. Perhaps my hon. colleague would like to comment on the rather broad nature of that commitment to the efforts of another country's military.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I do seem to get the short questions, but that is okay.

I am just going back to the questions I asked the Liberal member in reference to subclause 6(2)(d). I see the definition of war or other armed conflict is neither defined geographically nor qualitatively, so we have some issues there that need to be addressed in committee.

Then of course we mitigate the effects of foreign armed conflict on Canada, so we are suggesting armed conflict that really is not on our soil. The emergency measures plan would reference perhaps other things that occur in other parts of the world.

These things should be well outlined in any committee work. I would ask the member opposite to comment.

....

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CONTENTS

Monday, September 25, 2006

Mackenzie Valley Environment

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, when he was in Yellowknife this past summer, the Prime Minister said he wants the north to be "liberated from the paternalistic policies of the past".

However, this is not the case when it comes to appointing northerners to the boards set up to protect the environment. Instead, he is allowing the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to continue Ottawa's paternalistic tradition.

For example, the government of the Northwest Territories nominated a knowledgeable and well respected northerner six months ago, and I now understand that the minister has asked for more names.

According to *Hansard*, when in opposition the minister said:

This is an important board and it has significant responsibility in respect of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. The minister has an obligation to set the public's concerns to rest and reassure Canadians of the integrity of the appointment process.

If the minister is unhappy with the name put forward by the government of the Northwest Territories, he should say so and explain why. If the minister says the paternalism--

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The Speaker:

The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles.

* * *

....

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act, 2006

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to impose a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products to the United States and a charge on refunds of certain duty deposits paid to the United States, to authorize certain payments, to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and to amend other Acts as a consequence, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I would like to get an opinion from my hon. colleague who has just given his speech about the direction the lumber industry would likely take with the completion of a deal such as this one.

We can talk about the deal in terms of what it stands for today, but of course, as the Conservatives have pointed out, it is a seven year to nine year agreement. We need to understand what the deal would entail for the Canadian worker, for the governments of the country, and for the provinces, where there may be requirements for industry support over the next number of years with this type of agreement in place. We need to understand what this deal is going to do to our value added sector in the forestry industry.

Would the hon. member give us a vision of what he sees for the forest industry in Quebec under this agreement?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the first words that I heard were that they are very happy to get this off the table for Atlantic Canada. Coming from the north and looking at the provisions whereby the north is not given any particular tariff on any of our exports of lumber from places such as Nunavut, I would say that probably I should go along with this agreement as well, but in reality we live in Canada. The whole country's lumber industry is at stake with the bill. The fact that one region is better suited under the bill than the other does not take away from the fact that we live in a larger country than the particular region the hon. member is talking about.

Coming from the north and being satisfied with an agreement that exempts northern producers from a tariff, that means nothing to the rest of the country. I think the hon. member should recognize that as well. Perhaps he would like to comment on how he is supporting the lumber industry across Canada as a whole. Perhaps he would put his comments in that perspective.

...

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 053

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Tuesday, September 26, 2006

Aboriginal Affairs

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, despite having a \$13 billion surplus, the government cut \$10 million from the first nations and Inuit tobacco control strategy, meaning that more aboriginal Canadians will get sick and die due to smoking. There was no consultation, no debate, another sign of just how arrogant and controlling is this Prime Minister.

At a time when this country has record surpluses, does the Prime Minister believe saving young aboriginal lives is fat to be trimmed?

(1500)

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Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, obviously nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, we have increased spending for our first nations communities and we will continue to do so, I am sure.

The question before this House is, can we deliver more effectively, can we deliver more responsibly and more honourably? In this case we are doing so because we believe that the taxpayer, including the aboriginal taxpayer, deserves no less.

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39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 056

CONTENTS

Friday, September 29, 2006

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act, 2006

The House resumed from September 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to impose a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products to the United States and a charge on refunds of certain duty deposits paid to the United States, to authorize certain payments, to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and to amend other Acts as a consequence, be read the second time and referred to a committee, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on to the bill in front of us.

I have heard the debate over the previous number of days and have followed it in the press and throughout the time I have been in Parliament. I have tried to put it in the perspective of the north. We are mentioned in the bill because the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut get an exemption under the clauses.

In some ways that is a result of certain trade links we have with the state of Alaska. Certainly the United States does not mind taking care of its own. In terms of Alaska and the relationship of how it receives lumber from some of the north, the United States is very good about taking care of its own. That speaks volumes about the United States and suggests to me volumes about what Canada is about right now.

This agreement is about short term gain for long term pain. Let us look at it from a perspective of what the government is trying to accomplish. The government is very interested in moving toward a majority in Parliament the next time an election is called. It is very interested in appearing to be decisive and able to deal with issues. I think this has triggered the effort that has gone into selling out our industry. It is short term gain.

There will be short term gain in the industry as well, because the industry is starved for dollars and opportunities. We will get some investment dollars back in the short term. Companies will be able to hang on for a little longer and continue to work in the industry. However, we are in a North American market where housing has boomed for many years and now it is starting to die. When housing dies, the requirement for forest products die and the prices drop.

As the prices drop, the duties come in, so our industry will get the double whammy. Not only will we not have prices that are strong, but we will also have a duty imposed on us. That duty will drive us further into the ground. As time goes on, the industry will either shrink or the corporations will recognize that unprocessed raw logs will continue to cross the border duty-free. Their incentive, as the prices drop and as the duties come on, will be to relocate manufacturing and processing of wood into the United States. That is exactly what will happen with this deal.

Where will we be at the end of the day with our lumber industry? We will be in long term pain. That is what we will get from this deal. We will get a short term gain and long term pain.

Where is Canada going with this softwood lumber deal? It is larger than that, of course. Canada fundamentally is structurally altered with the free trade deal. Exports to the United States increased by 250%, and the U.S. now receives 87% of all Canadian exports.

As Canada becomes more dependent upon U.S. markets, trade within Canada and the rest of the world has decreased. The result of the free trade deal has led to dependency. We are in a dependent position to a country that has 10 times the economic clout that we do. We put ourselves in a position of a mouse and we have shortened the chain to the elephant. What kind of life is that when we are so close to that big foot?

I have noticed one thing in the softwood lumber deal. It is the interference of the deal in federal-provincial and provincial to provincial relationships. All of a sudden we have the United States demanding that we treat our internal politics differently.

We have deals for the Maritimes. The Americans have given it an exemption. We have different deals for Quebec. We have different deals across the country. Therefore, we have a foreign power now telling us how to run our internal affairs. That to me is once again an abrogation of Canada's sovereignty, the sovereignty for which all our forefathers fought hard and that this government seems to treat with a great deal of disdain.

(1035)

The rights of Canadian citizens are being taken away in this deal. All of a sudden we have a deal that has numerous punitive clauses that go beyond most people's expectations when they go into business. Corporate directors are to be held liable for corporate debts due to the duties that are imposed under this deal, even for companies in bankruptcy.

Spouses and children are liable for the debts in the case of transferred properties. We are going to track them down to make sure they deliver this blood money over to the government.

Searches without warrants are authorized under clause 77 for records pertaining to payments and taxes. The authoritarian arm of the government will come down on these people who try to go away from this very special deal with the United States. Canada is basically giving up control of our country's resources to a foreign power.

When we think of it, this is a foreign power that is 10 times our size. When we focus on its finances and its manufacturing, the U.S. is a global power of immense and important distinction. What does Canada have in contrast? Canada is a country of 32 million people with a vast landscape of land and resources. Canada's strength is in what we do with those resources and how we position those resources for our children and our grandchildren.

When we sell out these resources, as we are doing here, we are doing irreparable harm to all those young children who want to grow up and live in their communities in regions of the country such as the northern and rural areas of Canada.

What are we doing? We are saying that this lumber is not for Canadians. We are saying that we will ship these logs down to the United States and these young Canadians can go and work in the cities. What we are doing here is giving up control.

I could talk about the energy deal that Canada signed under NAFTA but I will save that for another debate because there certainly should be a debate on our energy sector soon. If the government thinks that it can get away without talking about energy in this Parliament, without putting these things on the table, then it has another think coming when it comes to the NDP caucus.

Conservatives used to say that good fences make good neighbours. When they said that I liked Conservatives. I thought they were good guys. I thought they were there to protect us and take care of us. They have certainly fallen far away from that goal.

I have not had a chance to talk about the environment yet. To me the boreal forest of Canada is one of the last refuges of natural wilderness that we have in this country and it is being destroyed. What will this deal do to help that boreal forest? Zero. This agreement does not take the boreal forest into account at all. We are again abrogating our responsibilities to the environment. We are creating a situation, unlike northern Europe where they get 12 jobs for every one job that we get in the forest industry, Canada is going in the other direction with this deal. This is very sad.

I do not think I need to talk about jobs. We have heard it and we know what will happen. This is the deal that these people want for Canada.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, yes, I outlined my feelings on this particular deal. In a number of ways, we are seeing the problems we have with Kyoto. We have a problem in that we want the

advancement of our oil and gas industry but it has gone without any environment regulation and without any planning gone into it to ensure it is working for Canadians and the goals of Canadians.

Right now my party is pushing very hard to see that tax subsidies are taken off some of these developments that, by and large, are serving our neighbours to the south. We need to stand up on this issue.

I feel confident that Canadians are listening to us when we talk about the issues. I am confident that at the next election, the bullies will get their due. If they do not stand up for Canadians soon, they will get their due.

With all the bullying they can do in the House of Commons, when it comes to bullying people into voting, it will not work.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, I will just speak to value added in terms of energy.

Right now, Sweden, Finland and many other countries are buying wood pellets from Canada and using them to produce clean energy in their own countries and yet we do not do this. We have a huge opportunity in Canada to develop the biomass energy industry and this could really help. The United States cannot stop us unless somewhere in this insidious deal the development of the biomass energy industry would be considered a subsidy to our people. I do not understand the deal well enough, but we are dealing with a powerful trade nation and it may have included some of those qualifications in the deal.

I certainly would like to understand the deal better because it is something that needs to be explored. However, the opportunities in the biomass energy field in this country are huge and we need to take advantage of them. They will work for Kyoto.

....

The Environment

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, Canada is not ready for climate change and, after five plans and \$6 billion, the Liberals did nothing that matters.

Just like the Liberals, the Conservative government gives \$1.5 billion to big oil and gas companies when they are reaping huge profits. To many of the people in my riding across the north, the caribou are their grocery store and climate change is killing a way of life.

When will the government stop the subsidies and get on with fighting climate change? Our northern children need a future too.

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Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the member is asking for specifics on our plan. The plan will be tabled next month. It is a good plan. It deals with greenhouse gas emissions. It is achievable, it is realistic and it is what the commissioner is recommending. It is good for Canada.

* * *

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 058

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Tuesday, October 3, 2006

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act, 2006

The House resumed from September 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to impose a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products to the United States and a charge on refunds of certain duty deposits paid to the United States, to authorize certain payments, to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and to amend other Acts as a consequence, be read the second time and referred to a committee, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the situation has changed quite remarkably with this deal over the last few days, in that the government has now postponed it again for 30 days.

To my mind the postponement would give the government, which claims it has all kinds of support for this deal, a great opportunity to go out across the land and conduct public hearings in three locations to actually hear what Canadians think about it. We could hold off on this vote until the government went out there to prove its case and show the public across the country that the government has support for this deal, that the supporters are willing to stand up in public hearings and express their support and give parliamentarians direction.

Does my hon. colleague feel that this would be a great opportunity for the government to prove its case?

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Wednesday, October 4, 2006

Autism

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition regarding autism spectrum disorder. The petitioners request that the Canada Health Act be amended to include specialized therapy for treatment of autism and for increased educational resources to train more persons to treat autism.

The petition has 56 signatures from my riding of Western Arctic, from the communities of Fort Smith and Yellowknife. I support this petition fully.

* * *

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Tuesday, October 17, 2006

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act, 2006

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to impose a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products to the United States and a charge on refunds of certain duty deposits paid to the United States, to authorize certain payments, to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and to amend other Acts as a consequence, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I rise again on the issue of softwood lumber and the agreement that is being pursued by the Conservative government that will leave our industry far short in the future.

It was very interesting to hear the Minister of Natural Resources speak today in the House and admit that the industry was now going to have to be restructured. Quite rightly, if this agreement is carried through, it will create fewer jobs in the industry and more exports of raw material to the United States.

The fact that this agreement has no tariff on raw logs will drive the destruction of our sawmill and related products industry across the country. This is especially so in British Columbia where the value of the logs is so high and the opportunity to export them is so strong.

Despite being right on this issue and supported by every tribunal ruling on softwood, we are going to lay down to the United States on this. This is not good. This sets a bad precedent. Once we give in on this issue, we can be sure that the United States will be back again on another issue. The U.S. does not recognize weakness, it recognizes strength. Here we are acting in a fashion that is weak, that is insipid and that does not nearly stand up the way we should.

It is so ironic that in this House the Conservative government has berated our leader for cutting and running in Afghanistan, yet at home we see the same Conservative

government cutting and running on this issue. I find that to be logically inconsistent and much like the rest of the government's debate on this issue.

This deal declares open season on any Canadian industry that the U.S. wants to target with illegal tariffs. The U.S. knows that it will be rewarded. The Conservatives are as bad as the Liberals were in caving in to American interests. I remember when the Liberals came to power in the early 1990s they said that they were not going to go along with NAFTA. What did the Liberals do as soon as they were elected to power? They went along with it. They definitely went along with it. The Liberals went along with a lot of those types of arrangements which for instance are now driving our energy industry and which are harmful in the long term to our economy.

NAFTA has reinforced inequalities of power across North America and has entrenched an economic model of integration that has resulted in a growing gap between the rich and the poor in North America.

This Harper-Bush sellout of our lumber industry is just the beginning.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, the NAFTA promise of secure access to the U.S. market was never anything but an illusion. Nothing but shreds remain of a guarantee of an end to arbitrary U.S. tariffs, yet the takeover of our industries continues apace, from retail to beef, from manufacturing to energy.

NAFTA prohibits the imposition of an export tax on energy or on basic petrochemicals that exceed those applicable to domestic consumption. That is article 605(b). When coupled with quantitative control prohibitions of GATT article XI, this ban on export taxation effectively and entirely removes government control of energy exports.

Not long ago we had a made in Canada price for energy, Canadian oil and gas companies were the primary people in the industry, and a 25 year reserve of gas was set aside for Canada's future needs. That is no longer the case.

The impact of the Alliance pipeline on our gas industry was huge. Yes, it brought immediate wealth to Alberta and British Columbia, but it also exported all the liquids that we need for our petrochemical industry in Edmonton, in the heartland of our oil and gas industry, and now we are short of those. We will see plant shutdowns soon. Just like the export of raw logs, when we export raw energy, as the Alliance pipeline does, down to factories in Chicago, we are exporting jobs south of the border. We are taking them out of the Canadian perspective.

No other country in the world in a time of peace has signed away so completely its energy resources, present and future. Canada, interestingly enough, is the only NAFTA country prevented by the energy exporting provisions in NAFTA. Four years ago the U.S. adopted a national energy policy that emphasized national energy security, self-sufficiency and even support for domestically owned firms. Canada, meanwhile, is required by NAFTA to continue exporting oil and gas to the U.S., even if it experiences shortages.

The interesting development was the liquefied natural gas terminals in Quebec where the company is talking about security of supply with two forms of energy, but when we look at the company's plan, the natural gas that is flowing to Quebec right now will be diverted to the United States once the LNG terminals are in place. Where is the security in that?

The Mexican energy sector under the agreement does not parallel that between Canada and the U.S. because Mexico protected its energy industry. Mexico's actions are given respect in the United States. To quote from the U.S. national energy task force report, "Mexico will make its own sovereign decisions on the breadth, pace and extent to which it will expand and reform its electricity, oil and gas capacity".

Integrating our energy and our economy into that of the U.S. means it is subject to U.S. ownership, decisions, priorities and prices. That is exactly what the softwood lumber deal means to our forest industry. The pattern continues. It was started by the Liberals and is continued by the Conservatives. Let us not wait until our industries and agriculture become completely uncompetitive, until Canadians are left begging for their own energy

at 40° below. We need to really look at this deal very carefully. This deal represents a further step down that slippery slope that leads to deep integration of our economies and the loss of Canadian sovereignty, jobs and a secure resource base.

(1710)

As a northerner, I probably live further away from the U.S. border than most people in this chamber. I feel secure in some ways there, but I do not feel secure when I come into this House of Commons and see the people who are representing Canada making decisions for short term benefit and political gain, and forgetting the long term implications to this country and to our sovereignty, which our fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers fought to first obtain and then continue to uphold.

John Diefenbaker would be turning over in his grave right now if he knew what these Conservatives were doing to our country. They are following the Liberal pattern. The Liberals were great at continentalism, always have been. Now all of a sudden we have them all together. I hope Canadians in the next election really realize that we have Tweedledee and Tweedledum when it comes to protecting Canadian sovereignty in this country.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, the member's question triggered in my mind one of the reasons why I worked so very hard to get into Parliament, which was the deal that was struck between multinational diamond companies and the Canadian government on the diamond resources in the north.

What a giveaway we had there. The Liberal Party, in its wisdom when it was in power, chose to give that industry carte blanche in the treatment of our resource there, and certainly as a northerner I railed against that for many years.

However, that is symptomatic of the larger problem. Canadians are wealthy in resources right now and we are willing to sell them off at the lowest price to maintain political promise.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Yes, some of us are. This \$1 billion that is in the hands of the United States now, I am sure will be used for purposes that are not favourable to Canada. If this deal goes ahead, that is the reality of it, and that reality is an unfortunate reality.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity for a number of years to sit on the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board where we looked at projects and conducted public hearings on a variety of issues.

In the north, which is quite a colonial state still, the federal government took the recommendations we had and basically ignored them. Apart from that, it is really vital that the public interest in each province and in the territories in economics is understood by the population. The population has the ability, whether it is small business, aboriginal people, or whoever it is, to understand the kinds of decisions that we are making and how they impact on their lives. That is a fundamental aspect of the democratic system.

Interestingly enough, often when we do environmental assessments, we move into economics and find out some of the answers. Therefore, the public hearing process would have helped the government gain a backbone and it would have also helped Canadians.

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Wednesday, October 25, 2006

Automobile Industry

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a petition to the Government of Canada for a new automotive trade policy that would cancel negotiations for a free trade agreement with Korea and develop a new trade policy that would require Korea and other offshore markets to purchase equivalent volumes of finished vehicles and auto parts from North America.

This petition has 159 signatures from Canadians.

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 070

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Thursday, October 26, 2006

Budget Implementation Act, 2006, No. 2

The House resumed from October 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

With the fiscal capacity that the government has, the budget was an opportunity to invest. It was also a time to invest because, of course, for 13 years we experienced the rather penurious actions of the previous Liberal government toward the people of Canada. While it reduced the fiscal deficit, it increased the human deficit in Canada.

Toward the end of their time, the Liberals softened, but not completely. I know that in 2005 the New Democratic Party had to fight very hard in that budget to ensure the Liberals did not get away with another tax cut for corporations and that they invested that money in people. That was very good and that is working.

Even within this budget and within Parliament today, the two parties of the right, because that is what they really are, are living off the good avails of the New Democratic Party and the work that it did in 2005. They are dining out on it. We do not want to forsake them of a good meal but they should remember who the cooks were.

In this budget, instead of investing more in the needs of Canadians, the Conservative government decided to squander another \$7 billion in corporate tax cuts and to keep the subsidies to oil and gas companies. Even with that, it is currently running a bigger budget surplus than the Liberals did.

Just into this fiscal year, it is \$2 billion ahead of its estimates. What did it turn around and do? It announced a billion dollars in cuts to programs that were in place all over the country, this little bit of money that was handed out under the Liberals in a variety of very serious areas, such as literacy, women, museums and health. The Conservatives must have sat in their caucuses and decided on how many programs they could cut a few dollars from and make them work even less than the Liberals did.

I want to talk about the tobacco control program that was cut for aboriginal people. In the Northwest Territories, prior to 2000 we had a smoking rate of 45% in our population. Over the last four years we have managed to bring that down to less 35%. That is a direct and positive result of our Government of the Northwest Territories putting money into it. The federal government also put money into the program because, of course, half our population is aboriginal.

We had the very successful butthead program in the schools which discouraged every child from taking up cigarette smoking. That is gone now. There was no consultation and no recognition of the importance of these programs. I am sure the territorial government will try to do something to replace it, but that is a loss.

The sale of tobacco in Canada contributes \$8.8 billion in taxes to federal, provincial and territorial governments. It is very important that we reinvest in the opportunities to reduce tobacco use. Just because we are on the dole with tobacco taxes does not mean that we should ignore our responsibility.

I now want to talk about the corporate tax cuts that the Conservatives have proposed.

(1230)

Across the country, corporate taxes in provincial hands have been spiralling downward. Provinces have to compete with each other for corporations to establish offices in their jurisdictions and pay their corporate taxes in those jurisdictions. The provinces are in a race to provide the lowest corporate tax rate to attract the companies to do this. Private individuals, of course, cannot afford to relocate just simply to get a lower personal income tax rate, but corporations can manage this quite well.

The responsibility for an across the board corporate tax rate lies with the federal government. In reality the federal government is the best agency to collect corporate taxes and should be the agency to collect those taxes, but over the time of the Liberals and the Conservatives, we have seen this denigrated to such a great degree.

We see the Conservative budget as crafted to meet the needs of the oil patch, not working Canadians. There are a few crumbs for working Canadians and everyone appreciates those. However, it is only a sleight of hand to take attention away from the billions in tax giveaways to big corporations, particularly oil companies, making obscene profits on the backs of hard-working Canadians and on the backs of our grandchildren as well, who will not have the share of the non-renewable resources that we are giving up now.

In the natural resources committee meeting earlier this week, we had presentations from CERI, the Canadian Energy Research Institute, which indicated that by 2020, if the expansion of the oil sands has taken place as outlined and if the cost of oil is \$40 U.S. a barrel, which is \$62 today, oil companies will make approximately \$1 trillion by 2020 from the oil sands, on an investment of \$100 billion.

The government's share of this will be less than 15%. We will see the escape of enormous amounts of resources and dollars out of our country and out of the hands of Canadians who need them so much. We need a government and a budget that speaks to the future of our natural resources, and that is quite clearly the case.

Another study was done recently in my territory by an independent group on the Mackenzie gas project, a project that Imperial Oil has indicated is marginally economic. Its study shows, and this was verified by economists and was done by an economist at Pacific Analytics out of Victoria, B.C., that the after-tax rate of return on this project will exceed 25%, and the oil companies are calling this a marginal project in Canada.

The project will deal in the hundreds of billions of dollars, with rates of return of this magnitude, yet they will be subjected to the lowest royalties and corporate taxes. All of this comes down very favourably for them. What does it do for Canadians, for our children and our grandchildren as we move along and require dollars for infrastructure and other things? It does nothing; it is squandered. This is why it is so important that we understand how our tax system works and that we stand up for Canadians.

We did not see this in the budget here and that is a shame. It is a crying shame that we do not see a move to ensure that the resources of our country serve the people of our country.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, as someone from the Western Arctic, I am very pleased to comment on those.

The fundamentals of the \$1 billion in cuts to these programs were not so much ideological as emotional. We have an emotional reaction to things that really make no sense to any Canadians. I cannot say how the inner workings of the Conservative caucus managed to come up with these cuts. I do not understand it. To me it was emotional, "I don't like this, I don't like that, let's grab some here, we don't like those people so we are going to do this".

As to ideology, there is a mirror to what the Liberal Party did through the 1990s with the budgets, such as reducing corporate taxes, passing the burden on to Canadians in different ways, selling out on resources. I do not see much difference, ideologically, between the Conservatives and the Liberals on this.

This is a question that is open to all Canadians. Is there a difference on the broad brush ideology between the Liberals and the Conservatives? I do not see it. Although, on the other hand, emotionally, the Conservatives were frustrated in many ways with some of the minor things the Liberals did and took out various programs. The court challenges program was an emotional reaction, much like we see on some of the crime bills coming up. People will use this as retail politics. They play on the emotions of people rather than speaking to the needs of Canadians.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, 20 seconds is not nearly enough time to touch on the damage being done by over-exploiting resources, whether it is to the service industries in Alberta that cannot hire anyone any more, whether it is to the--

....

Budget Implementation Act, 2006, No. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way mentioned the issue of the vote the other night.

The opposition day motion put forward really was very thin soup for Canadians as not a penny was added for the people who have been hit so hard by those cuts, but it was a very rich appetizer for the Liberal soul. I think those things made a bit of a meal that we in the New Democratic Party had a hard time eating.

Parliament is here not to keep score or to deal in that fashion, but to accomplish things for Canadians. We would love to work with the Liberals, just as we would love to work with the Conservatives on accomplishing things for Canadians.

How do you think your motion would have restored any of the dollars that were lost to Canadians in those cuts?

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Tuesday, October 31, 2006

Fisheries and Oceans

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, in the north when we ship goods by boat from Montreal to Iqaluit for instance, the price of these goods is raised. When goods are bought in Montreal and the 6% GST is paid on them, we must add on the price of the freight and the GST on the cost of the freight on top of the goods when it arrives in Iqaluit.

The tax system in Canada is not set up to be fair for northerners, for people who live at the end of the supply chain and have the highest cost. These people pay the highest consumption taxes.

In fact, northerners are paying more than their fair share of taxation right now. Whatever we can do to reduce the cost to northerners is a good idea. Would my hon. colleague speak to the concept of reducing costs to northerners?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to comment on my hon. colleague on the issues he has raised. He mentioned the tax system as a way to compensate northerners for increased costs.

The northern residents tax deduction, which came in the eighties, has been maintained at the same level since then. The cost of living has gone up over 50%, so we saw a degradation in the northern residents tax deduction while the Liberals were in power.

In his speech, my hon. colleague mentioned that he thought this was a more appropriate way to deal with the inequities in the cost of living. Would he comment on the government's interest in reviewing and reassessing the very important northern residents tax deduction as part of his government's effort to alleviate the high cost of living for northerners?

....

Government Programs

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Statistics Canada issued a report saying that the rate of violent victimization in Canada's north is almost three times the rate for residents in the rest of the country.

The government needs to take action to help northerners, action by supporting a better society, but the government does not understand how to make the lives of Canadians better, which is why it cut funding to literacy programs, volunteer groups and the Status of Women.

These programs are not fat to be trimmed. They are part of a foundation for a better society. Rather, the government wants to see more unemployment due to high illiteracy, fractured communities without essential volunteers and women without leadership to protect them. All of this will increase the amount of violence in the north, not decrease it.

Cutting these programs will only increase violence and suffering among northerners. It seems that the Conservative government just does not care.

* * *

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Thursday, November 2, 2006

Opposition Motion--Canadian Forces

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I come from a northern region and 50% of my riding is aboriginal. I am the son of a veteran of the second world war and I recognize the great sacrifice many people made in their effort to preserve and enhance our way of life and the way of life of other people in the world.

Our aboriginal population was also well represented in the military. When we look at the socio-economic statistics of the aboriginal population living in cities or in isolated locations, quite obviously, they tell the story of their difficult economic conditions.

Our effort to increase the ability of our veterans, including our aboriginal veterans, to live comfortably in their senior years is extremely important. I would like to know what the member thinks about these issues as they relate to our aboriginal soldiers, their contribution and their life afterward?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I feel my hon. colleague has a strong sense of the importance of pension plans for everybody across the country.

I have experience in the north with people in the RCMP, their lifestyles, their commitment to travel and to living in a variety of places during their working careers. They also fit in with the Canadian Forces in many instances. These are lifestyles that at the end of the day leaves one a little short. As politicians, we perhaps experience the same thing. While we are in Parliament we neglect a lot of the things at home.

When it comes to pensions for our service men and women, would the member not agree that we should do our very best as employers for the people whose burdens may be greater than the average?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, we do want to be generous with our veterans' pensions, as the hon. member said in her answer to the question, but how do we deal with these pensions with the disparity in the cost of living that exists for many pensioners across the country? I think of the aboriginal people in northern Canada with the high cost of living, the remoteness and the fact that a lot of them have served in the armed forces and have been away from their communities for a very long time. When they return, how do they deal with re-establishing a lifestyle as a veteran and a pensioner in the situation where the cost of living is out of sight?

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Friday, November 3, 2006

Aboriginal Affairs

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the languages that were first heard in Canada are dying and the Conservative government is lending a helping hand.

In the Northwest Territories, the number of aboriginal people fluent in their languages fell from 59% in 1984 to 44% in 2004. The figures are even worse for the rest of Canada. Soon, languages that have been spoken in this country for millennia will be gone.

With a \$13 billion surplus, can the minister please explain why the government has cut \$160 million from aboriginal language programs?

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Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the previous government, in its usual way, always set aside moneys and made some big announcements but did nothing with that money. There were no plans.

We intend to work with the groups to make sure that these languages, some of which are in jeopardy, and the culture of the aboriginal communities are there. In fact, this government has committed \$40 million in permanent funding for the aboriginal languages initiative.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, Innuvialukun, Gwich'in, North Slavey, South Slavey, Chipewyan, Tlicho, Cree, Beaver, Hare, and Mitchef, all of these languages in my riding and many others across the country could become extinct without proper funding.

The minister calls her work a reallocation of funds. Should aboriginal people trust that statement any more than senior citizens should have trusted a promise not to tax income trusts?

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I am very aware that there are languages that are on the brink of extinction. That is why we need a plan. We have to record these languages. We have to make sure, instead of continually talking about what is to be done with vast sums of money and doing nothing, that we are actually going to act.

* * *

....

Criminal Code

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conditional sentence of imprisonment), be read the third time and passed.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across made some good points in terms of the various crimes that we are dealing with. Quite clearly, we are in the twilight of a time called the war on drugs. This has created a lot of the crime that we are dealing with in Canada right now, as well as the sentencing. It is in the twilight because I think we have recognized that it does not work. In the last Parliament, we had some debate and discussion. We even brought some tough bills forward to look at how we could deal with this better.

Part of getting tough on crime is taking the oxygen out of the system that criminals live on. In reality, if we want to get tough on crime we need to find ways to eliminate crime. I would like the hon. member across to comment on that.

....

Heritage Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Protection Act

The House resumed from September 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-222, An Act to recognize and protect Canada's hunting, trapping and fishing heritage, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-222, an act to recognize and protect Canada's hunting, trapping and fishing heritage which was brought forward by the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette. He has put forward this bill for reasons aimed at ensuring Canadians are able to continue to hunt, fish and trap on federal and public land and waters.

Inland fishing is a shared federal-provincial jurisdiction. Fishing in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon is exclusively under federal jurisdiction. Hunting and trapping are exclusively under provincial-territorial jurisdictions.

The bill is essentially flawed in that it speaks to rights held under provincial jurisdictions. I recognize that this is a private member's bill and would not necessarily hold any party to its passage. It is somewhat meaningless in this regard because it speaks to rights that are held under provincial jurisdictions, which my party wants to protect. We certainly want to protect provincial jurisdiction over these rights in my jurisdiction.

In the case of my riding, most of the hunting, fishing and trapping rights are held under comprehensive land claims in areas where land claims have been settled with the various land claims bodies and are represented in some cases by councils, along with the territorial government. They determine the disposition of wildlife in those areas.

Hunting, trapping and fishing in the Northwest Territories is significant in every respect. As a sustenance part of our economy, it is very important. All the small communities throughout my riding rely heavily on the ability of their members to hunt for food to keep their cost of living in line, to preserve their culture, and to really respect the way the land should be protected through use. That is an important point.

Hunting, trapping and fishing are very important to people in my riding. They are not something with which we trifle. They are not something we use as political tools between one group or the other. They are essential for the conduct of ordinary life.

Bill C-222 would create a right for non-aboriginal people to fish, hunt and trap, and place restrictions on legislation designed to manage fish and animal populations. Right now only aboriginal people in some areas have the unfettered right to hunt, fish and trap, and those rights came through constitutional protection. These rights came from their history and their heritage over thousands of years.

(1320)

They are a recognition of the essential part of their life which has gone on for many generations and has produced a consistent result on the land, a result that, in many measures, was in harmony. To say that man can ever remain in perfect harmony with his environment is something that we all have to consider every day.

Right now, our relationship with the environment is changing quickly. We see this all over the country. Even the aboriginal people who run the hunting and fishing councils in the Northwest Territories recognize the extreme problems that our environment is facing in terms of how the changes in climate are affecting our wildlife.

Interestingly enough, in the last six months, the Tuktoyaktuk game council passed a motion to restrict the harvesting of caribou on its land. This is a major step. This community, which so heavily relies on harvesting caribou, has said to its people, "Look, we have to take steps here. Our herds are in precipitous decline. We can't continue to hunt at this point in time in the fashion we have in the past".

The aboriginal people are taking hold of the issues that surround them in their traditional rights and in the way that they deal with the land and the environment. I think that speaks well to their governance. Their governance comes through constitutional rights

and through recognition of their inherent rights and from that, through their comprehensive claims their ability to govern themselves.

These things are ongoing as we speak. This is part of how the harvesting of wildlife is evolving in my jurisdiction.

Our territorial government is also concerned about the complete caribou herd across the north. The decline that we see in one area is mirrored in almost every other area. The caribou are a great indicator species of change because the energetics of their food cycle and their breeding cycle are so linked to vegetation, climate, and their ability to survive in very inhospitable terrain.

I think quite clearly that the intent of the bill to preserve hunting and trapping rights for other Canadians needs very careful examination right now.

I would be the last one to in any way impinge on people's ability to hunt, fish and trap but, at the same time, there are so many issues surrounding our environment, the animals on our land, and our ability to preserve those species for the future. Putting more legal words in the way our governments work across the country is very difficult at this time.

I sense the member's emotional response to this bill and as a person who lives in rural areas, I certainly recognize that.

In some rural areas, of course, climate change has increased the availability of animal populations and hunting in some areas could probably increase. We could hand out more permits and we could do more hunting. This would be a successful effort in many areas.

(1325)

Once again, it comes down to regulation and to understanding of the animal populations of the area, not going back to any particular right or privilege that one group or the other may have on the land. That is my point on this bill. I wish the hon. member well with his intentions. I will leave it at that.

....

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Wednesday, November 22, 2006

National Defence

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the NDP has learned through access to information that a major fuel spill at the Canadian Forces installation at Alert went unreported at the time. The significant incident report which we obtained states that on September 6 of this year a flex expansion joint failed and 21,000 litres of jet fuel were spilled at Alert.

Why did the government fail to inform northern Canadians? What actions has the minister taken to ensure this never happens again?

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Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, as soon as that incident occurred, the defence department moved quickly to clean it up. All the necessary actions have been taken.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, current and former northern military installations have wreaked havoc on the environment.

Why did it take the NDP to have this information see the light of day? The government promised to be open, transparent and accountable.

The minister should apologize. This incident should have been reported to the hard-working people of the north. We are not second class citizens.

Will he immediately announce that any incident like this will be promptly reported to the Canadian people?

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Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, all the necessary actions were taken to clean up the spill. I should inform the member that DND is spending about \$60 million each year cleaning up residue that was left in the north for the last 30 to 40 years. We will continue to do that until all the areas are cleaned up.

* * *

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Thursday, November 23, 2006

Opposition Motion—Quebec Nation

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, to my hon. colleagues across the way, as a Canadian and as a parliamentarian, I truly would love to converse with them in our other official language of this Parliament. It is impossible for me to do that in a coherent fashion. It is a part of my growth that I must go through as a parliamentarian in the future.

Having said that, I feel that we are debating issues here that speak to the reality of the situation in Canada. I think both motions that have been brought forward in this House speak to reality. Quebec is a nation within a unified Canada. That is the reality of where we are today in 2006. Certainly, the amendment that the Bloc has brought forward speaks to reality as well.

I feel that the debate on the abstract issues of a nation is important as well. I think we need to discuss that to understand much better how nationhood represents it with people, language, culture and history, and this is an arena where we can make those choices.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that the reality of what we are dealing with right now is the most important thing in this debate in this Parliament?

....

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Friday, November 24, 2006

Aboriginal Affairs

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court has ruled that the government has the duty to consult with the Dene Tha of northern Alberta on the development of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

The joint review panel has said that it will reconsider its hearing schedule in light of this court decision. However, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development says that this ruling will not slow down his push for the project.

How will the minister prove he cares about the concerns of the Dene Tha or the Deh Cho or the Sahtu? Are all these consultations just for show?

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Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is very supportive of the Mackenzie gas project. It is subject, though, to undergoing rigorous environmental assessments and regulatory review.

We will continue to discuss this project with all the parties involved. We do not want to pre-empt the economic benefits that will be there for all northerners and aboriginal Canadians.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, Canada needs northern gas, but the north needs a fair deal from Canada.

To the media last week the minister suggested that the decision of the Federal Court just did not matter. It seems to me the minister has forgotten his role in judgment on this process. He has a duty to hear from every northerner who has a stake in the pipeline.

Could the minister advise the House if he will be thinking of the needs of average northerners, particularly the needs of aboriginal northerners, upon whose land this pipeline will be built, or will he be thinking of the needs of his friends in the Petroleum Club?

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Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, we will be keeping in mind all the needs of aboriginal Canadians throughout the north. This is very important for the economic benefits that will be seen from this project.

We are proceeding with other plans as well, a \$500 million socio-economic fund, which will help remediate the effects of this project.

* * *

....

The Québécois

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the motion that this question be now put.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, for her excellent speech linking some of the aspects of other people struggles in this country to the struggles of Quebec in achieving its proper state in this country.

I live in the Northwest Territories where we have many aboriginal first nations that are actively pursuing self-government. They are actively moving forward to ensure that they have their nations well established in Canada. Key to their progress is an understanding of their culture and language. It certainly was not well supported with the taking away of aboriginal language programs by the government just recently.

As well, we have in my territory the first claim being negotiated by a Métis first nation, the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, in Canada as a whole. Once again the need to hold onto their culture, their expression, and their history is so basic to nation building.

How are we building Canada as a nation? Right now in this Parliament we have the opportunity in nation building. We are going to be creating in the next while a special committee and the four parties in this Parliament are going to talk about nation building when it comes to dealing with the question of greenhouse gas emissions, the climate and the environment for the future. That is nation building as well.

To my hon. colleague, when we recognize the Québécois as a nation, how can this Parliament work to build Canadians as a nation across this country?

....

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Monday, November 27, 2006

The Québécois

Motion that debate be not further adjourned

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, sanctimony is one thing, but as a member of the New Democratic Party on this particular issue, I have a resolution from our last convention that drives our support for it. We have taken that debate back to our constituents and they have heard it, at a convention, in a public place.

Judging by the emails that I have received and the correspondence that has come on this issue, Canadians want to know what we are talking about here. They want to know what the parties in this Parliament are talking about when they speak about nationhood, when they speak about Québécois as a nation. They want to know that. So, what better way than through active debate in this House?

The Prime Minister has brought forward this motion in a rather quick and, some people feel, unseemly fashion. But, really, we all want to speak to it because we all agree it is important.

So, let us have the debate, let us discuss it, and let us get everyone's position out on the floor in a good fashion where we can work with that discussion to assure Canadians that we are all thinking of the better interests of this country in the long term and not just simply short term political gain.

Does the hon. member not agree that debate will bring Canadians onside on this motion and will help this motion become part of the beautiful lexicon of Canadian politics as it develops?

....

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Tuesday, November 28, 2006

Opposition Motion—Health Care

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I have a little trouble with the member's chronology of the events of the last 13 years. Those years work out to about 150 or 155 months that the Liberals were in power and had opportunities to do quite a bit. They are certainly coming down very hard on the NDP for shortening that 155 months by 2 months by saying that we were responsible for the health care problems in this country because of it. My hon. colleague should really look at this in a rational fashion when she talks about responsibility for the health of Canadians.

Yes, we did go through tough times and the very tough decisions that were taken by her government did affect a lot of Canadians. However, what we did not see from that government was a plan that would have really reduced wait times, which was a strong, preventive health program within the government that could have examined every facet of what we do in Canada, whether it is housing, air pollution or nutrition, all the things that make up a healthy lifestyle. We did not see that from the Liberals in the days when they cut programs and preferred to sit on large surpluses.

Where was my hon. colleague in health prevention through those 13 years that led up to the two months that she is blaming the New Democratic Party for?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important subject. During the election, the Conservatives indicated that they had five priorities. They wanted to pass an accountability act, which has not happened yet. They proposed to cut the GST, which has resulted in a one cent decrease in the cost of a cup of coffee. They wanted to get tough on crime and have passed quite a number of bills, and I suppose they do deserve some credit for that. They were going to help parents with the cost of raising their children, which has resulted in the infamous \$100 child care scheme.

Also, they were going to work with the provinces to establish a patient wait time guarantee, which seems to have been forgotten. It has just vanished. There has been no work done with the provinces and the territories on improving health care and that is what we are talking about here, because the increasing wait times are only a symptom of the real problems that underlie our health care system. Coming from a northern region, I think I can speak to these very well.

The disease we are seeing here is the lack of political will along with governments that cannot get their priorities straight. Right now in the Northwest Territories we are seven doctors short of what we need. We need a family doctor in Fort Simpson, two general practitioners in Fort Smith, a GP in Hay River, and a radiologist, an anesthetist and a psychiatrist in Yellowknife.

For many of my constituents, the nearest emergency room is several hours away by airplane. People have died while flying for medical help, and in the not too distant past. Many northerners who could still be alive today are dead not because of a lack of dedication by medical professionals, but because of a lack of political will and attention to the long term requirements of our health system.

The health care situation in the north, not just in the territories but in the north that stretches right across Canada and encompasses all the areas of the northern provinces, is something that Canadians should be ashamed of. The level of health care endured by ordinary Canadians who live in the north is a black spot on this nation.

I ask members to listen to these statistics. Nunavut's life expectancy is 10.5 years less than that of the whole country. Infant deaths are over three times the national average. This black spot was made bigger by the Liberal governments of the 1990s. Starting with the massive cuts in the mid-1990s, all in the name of fighting the national debt, the Liberals provided just enough resources to northern health care to meet the minimum needs.

In the Northwest Territories, aboriginal health care is provided by the territorial government, which is then reimbursed by the federal government. However, the federal government, starting with the Liberals, has not repaid the territories for the cost of delivering this service. It is done only on a predetermined fee basis. Using a hypothetical example, a procedure may cost \$1,000 while the federal government will reimburse only \$800. This has resulted in a lack of funds for the entire system.

Since 2002, the Government of the Northwest Territories has added over \$59 million and 183 new front line health care staff. Only \$9.7 million of the increase has come about as a result of federal increases for health care. These figures were determined in June 2006.

Today's figure for federal support is really much lower, thanks to the elimination of the aboriginal anti-smoking program, which went the way of equality for women, volunteerism, the tourism industry and all those other cuts we saw earlier this year. We were making progress on reducing the rate of smoking. It went from 45% down to 35% in my territory. This was an enormous improvement. In Nunavut, for instance, the rate of lung cancer is four times the national average. To take away this program was utterly ridiculous. It was not in the best interests of Canadians, nor was it good fiscal management.

(1655)

The government promised average Canadians that it would take action on health care, but we have seen no action, just like we have seen no action on the environment. Where we have seen action, though, is on supporting the needs of large defence contractors. Not one of the Conservative priorities was increased military spending. The government can find any reason to spend more money on the military, but few reasons to spend money on ordinary Canadians.

One of the government's favourite topics is Arctic sovereignty. Northerners cannot have adequate health care, but we can have multi-billion dollar icebreakers. Assuming a total cost of \$2 billion for these new ships, on what could this money be better spent? It could hire 21,000 nurses or 4,000 doctors, build five hospitals, or fully fund 10 medical schools the size of the University of Toronto. It may not be clear to people, but if we do not have people living in the Arctic, and providing decent health care does go a long way to ensuring that people live there, then we will have little claim for it as a territory.

Working Canadians should not have been surprised when the health care priority went over to the Department of National Defence. With the government and its Liberal supporters voting to continue the mission in Afghanistan for at least two more expensive years, this trend will continue.

What action should the government take on health care so that it will live up to its promise to average Canadians? For a start, it could implement the recommendations in the "Final Report of the Federal Advisor on Wait Times". The government could coordinate and fund a Canadian health human resources action plan that would support post-secondary education, continuing education and workplace retention.

The government could bring in a national pharmacare program. It could save Canadians money. It could deliver better pharmaceutical care to all Canadians. It would be of enormous benefit to our society.

These are things that average Canadians want. When Canadians say they want action on health care, they want real action on health care, not just words and empty promises.

While it was the Liberals who created the crisis in health care, this government is continuing to do everything it can to destroy a system that is part of the Canadian identity. For northerners and for all those who live in remote communities, there is no alternative to a fully funded public health care system. Can we trust either of these two parties that have held the reins of power over the years when our health care system has been in denial? I do not think so.

Canadians need a party like the New Democratic Party to fight hard for proper, well funded, progressive health care, health care that promotes and funds preventative health, health care that over the long term would actually solve our endemic problem of wait times in our precious system. From sea to sea to sea, all Canadians have a huge stake in a health approach that really works.

We support this motion today, but this is hardly an answer in itself. We need to look at the whole system. We need to ensure that the whole system has the funds, the support of Canadians and the direction that will lead to Canadians' health in the future.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, one does not want to impugn the direction the government is taking on a serious issue like this, but as the member pointed out, there are opportunities here to do much more than that. The position outlined by the Minister of Health is, once again, pretty thin soup to aboriginal communities across the country, whose issues surrounding health care are so large, whose requirements are so large, and whose need is "right now".

It suggests to me that the government is floundering, that it cannot make up its mind. The Minister of Health cannot get into the Prime Minister's office quickly enough to find out what his next step is going to be. I think we really need to see the government take proper action, real and decisive action. We can feel the disappointment of Canadians who are waiting on these pilot projects when the Canadian medical system understands the issues and knows the solutions. It is really disappointing.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, the government has not shown any ability to communicate even among its own members. Within its own cabinet, there does not seem to be a lot of communication. The thought that the government would move ahead to establish the kinds of relationships it needs with the provinces with its internal failures of communication does not seem to follow.

When it started out, there was good hope that it could pull this together and create a momentum within the provinces, which has to happen. However, without efforts being put in, without a sense that the government wants to communicate and work cooperatively with the provinces, we are not going to end up in 2006 with a wait times guarantee in place.

....

Main Estimates, 2006-07

Concurrence in Vote 10--Department of Natural Resources

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the hon. minister a question in reference to his prologue where he talked about the Prime Minister's statements about Canada being an energy superpower.

Does he also take into account the fact that in his natural resources energy outlook, the situation with natural gas in Canada is so critical that by 2015 we may have to abrogate the proportionality clause in NAFTA in order to keep our own homes and businesses heated in the winter?

When the minister talks about a superpower, he is probably talking about the oil sands where we see development that basically has one of the lowest energy returns for investments in the whole world in terms of a source of fossil fuels. When we are talking about an energy superpower, we are talking about a country where things are not going exactly right.

We saw the Prime Minister over in Russia in July trying to set up a deal with Vladimir Putin for liquefied natural gas to export into Canada. That does not sound like a superpower. It sounds like we have a country with serious conditions in our energy industries that may not be apparent right now but, by the minister's own natural resources outlook, are coming very quickly for Canada.

I would love to support the minister's budget but I want to know that his budget will be directed in a fashion that can return to Canadians an assurance that they will have a future in the kinds of energies that we are producing. What is this superpower that we are talking about?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to question my colleague who I sit with on the natural resources committee. The minister had his chance to speak. I asked him a question in relation to some of his issues. He came back at me, claiming that I was somehow standing in the way of progress on renewable clean energy for northern communities, something with which I have put 10 years of my life into and been very successful. I particularly want the minister to understand that he is disparaging someone who works in that field and, from the ground up, has put renewable energy into northern communities.

My question for my hon. colleague is on carbon sequestration. The report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development showed that the carbon sequestration program delivered by Natural Resources Canada was a resounding failure. The program was supposed to initiate 3.5 megatons of carbon reductions and it came up with .03 megatons. The expenditures of \$25 million were directed toward five projects and industry only picked up on one of them, the project in Weyburn. The industry knows that this technique is far from developed and its estimates puts it at \$100 a tonne to sequester CO₂ from any fossil fuel development. This is what has been reported in the natural resources committee.

What does my hon. colleague think of a minister who does not come to the committee and does not get the information about these very important subjects that form the basis of where we will go with energy in the future?

....

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Monday, December 4, 2006

Canada's Clean Air Act

(Bill C-30. On the Order: Government Orders)

October 19, 2006—The Minister of the Environment—Second reading and reference to a legislative committee of Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, the Energy Efficiency Act and the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act (Canada's Clean Air Act).

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the new Leader of the Opposition who will bring passion and credibility to this issue. However, I hope his passion and credibility are greater than it was during the years he was a minister in the previous government.

On the renewable fuel option that the minister talked about, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development said that a 5% change in the fuel mixture in Canada would amount to about a 2% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from that same fuel.

Would my hon. colleague not agree that even a one kilometre per litre improvement in fuel efficiency in vehicles would amount to so much more than this renewable fuels option?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the ability of Canada to respond to air pollution and CO₂ emissions, it is important that we set a clear direction early on for efforts in both these regards.

When we look at the idea of a clean coal plant and we say that we will invest great sums of money in reducing the emissions from the coal plant but that we will not take the next step right away to put in a system to sequester the CO₂ emissions, this leads the industry in the wrong direction. We need a strong response right now that speaks to both the issues of air pollution and CO₂ emissions. We cannot have our industries not understanding right away that they have to respond to both.

I would like the minister to comment on that. These issues are not that easy to separate and should not be separated in the solutions that we are proposing.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I am interested in the Bloc's territorial approach to climate change, because the need for climate change, the need for territories, countries and the world to adapt, is truly a global situation. It does not rest with the smaller units. It rests with the larger units. That is what Kyoto was all about: recognizing that we had a problem that was global in nature.

For the member across to say that the choices provinces made about their energy systems were choices is somewhat misleading, I think, because mostly in Canada we have set patterns of energy use that go back decades, long before Kyoto was an issue.

Does the hon. member across not agree that solutions to climate change are global in nature? Second, does he not agree that solving those issues is going to require inspired leadership in all parts of this country, not simply having provinces meeting minimum requirements but taking leadership where they have the ability to do so? As for Quebec, its position with hydroelectric power and the opportunities to provide that leadership, would he not see that as a better role for Quebec in this issue?

....

Canada's Clean Air Act

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I have worked with my hon. colleague for years on energy issues, going back to the 1990s. We need to approach this movement to committee with a degree of optimism.

The past record of the Liberal government is not what is at stake right now. What is at stake is putting together an act that can drive progress in Canada and, with the support of all the parties in Parliament, will represent a consensus that will allow us to move ahead in a way that will take the politics and rhetoric out of it.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that the work we need to do in Parliament is actually very important in building a consensus in Parliament and across the country?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the motion to send the clean air act to a legislative committee so all parties of the House can participate in the development of a significant thing for Canada, for the economy of Canada and for the future of our children and grandchildren.

Action on climate change must happen now so our families have cleaner air to breathe and cleaner water to use. The average Canadian wants results from us.

When we look at greenhouse gas emissions, we know quite well that they are mostly created through the burning of fossil fuels. The fossil fuel industry is large. The energy industry has taken on a great proportion.

At the same time, over the past 20 years, since the failed national energy program, we have been unable to discuss in a rational fashion a national energy strategy, a way to look at the energy picture of our country. The situation is further exacerbated by the provincial control over resources. It is not laid out very carefully so we can take charge of our future in energy and our environment.

We need to look at alternatives to fossil fuels, not only because they create greenhouse gases but because Canada, as well as the rest of the world, is running out of fossil fuels that are affordable to any economy.

There is much discussion about whether the world has reached peak oil production. The U.S. already has and it has moved to a point where it spends an incredible amount of money on defence and foreign relations simply to hold on to its supply of oil.

Canada has reached peak production in conventional oil. We still have to rely on heavy oil from the tar sands to maintain and increase any production in our system. That is the reality of Canada in oil. Are we an energy super power? Not really.

According to Natural Resources Canada, we will reach peak production of natural gas in 2011, at 6.6 trillion cubic feet. This is a serious issue for all Canadians. Canadian use natural gas in their homes and businesses. This issue really speaks to what we are doing here as well.

Today the energy required to support the conventional production of natural gas and crude oil represents between 8% and 15% of the net energy produced. For unconventional production, we are moving with ever increasing speed, whether it is the tar sands, coal bed methane or very difficult to reach sources of energy. The energy required represents more than 30% of the energy required to extract it.

When we talk about intensity of emissions in the energy industry, we really miss the boat. We do not have a proposition that says we will reduce the intensity of emissions. We will increase it because that is the way the energy industry is moving.

We are going to see the demand for natural gas increasing. We know that probably by 2015 we will have to abrogate the proportionality clause in the NAFTA agreement. We will be unable to keep up the supply of natural gas to the U.S. to the extent that we do now. We simply will not have that supply available. We will be unable to use it in our own homes.

When we talk about the clean air act and setting short term targets for improving energy efficiency and use of energy and for developing alternative energy, we are working to save our economy and moving it forward in a progressive fashion. This is not only about cleaning the air and meeting our Kyoto commitments, it also about taking care of the basics of Canadian life with a good supply of energy.

A few people believe that importing liquefied natural gas into Canada is going solve many of our energy problems. This could not be further from the truth. It is clear that the projects proposed for Quebec, New Brunswick, British Columbia and Nova Scotia are simply meant to feed gas to the United States.

(1615)

The U.S. currently accounts for 25% of the natural gas consumed in the world every day. It will increase its use of liquefied natural gas, but it is not a solution.

To produce liquefied natural gas, tonnes of greenhouse gases are released when the gas is liquefied and then converted back to gas. Thirty per cent or more of the natural gas is needed for this process. What we are doing is exporting pollution to other countries when we take on liquefied natural gas. We are not buying credits in another country. We are simply turning our problem over to another country. It still has the same impact on the atmosphere, which we all share.

We realize that fossil fuels will continue for many years as the main fuel for Canada, but that does not mean we should not support the development of alternatives now when they are cheap. For example, on solar power, both the Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to provide the proper support to this industry.

Canada is ranked at the bottom per capita in its commitment to the development of solar energy. Compare this to China, which has tens of thousands of manufacturers. Canada has a great solar resource, better than western Europe per square metre or however it is measured. Yet in Canada we have failed to move forward with this industry. We need incentives to make it happen. The NDP would have government buildings built so that solar energy would be incorporated into the plans. This would support the development of the solar industry and provide incentives to install 100,000 solar thermal building systems over five years.

On wind power, again, the Liberals and Conservatives have failed to provide proper support. Wind power in Canada is a great resource. We have a great opportunity linked to hydroelectric power to put a greater percentage of wind power into our system than almost any other country in the world. We need to develop the programs that will make that happen.

Gary Doer, the Premier of Manitoba, spoke eloquently about this at our convention. He knows that Manitoba is moving forward in this fashion. Great hydroelectric resource and great wind resource when tied together will give us a beautiful system.

We would set and meet a target of 10,000 megawatts of wind generation by 2010, place a priority on building turbines in Canada and negotiate with provinces and territories to adopt fixed price strategies for renewable power, which would provide producers with an incentive to invest. We would provide support for local cooperative and renewable power production using wind and other renewable resources. At the local level is where we can really make progress on renewable energy.

There is hydroelectric power as well and we need to take advantage of that. In the Northwest Territories many communities are examining small scale hydro developments. I have looked at them. We need that incentive. We need the sense to move forward. We can get victory in this. We can do well on hydroelectric power in Canada. We have not gone nearly far enough.

The NDP would support the development of hydro by helping coal dependent provinces replace polluting power with cleaner alternatives through an east-west electricity grid. This is one of the key concepts that has to take place. We need to link the country together so we can support each other. We need to have that infrastructure in place.

We need to negotiate with the provinces and territories to stop fixed price strategies for renewable power. We need to provide the same level of incentives proposed for wind and solar to assist in the development of small hydro. Energy use has a major role in cleaning our air. We must look at these sources of energy right now. I know renewables are number one.

Ordinary Canadians have already had to wait under the Liberal government. We have not had to do anything because there has not been the pressure on this issue. There has not been the all party support in the House of Commons that is required to make these things happen. Today we are working on a proposition that will bring us together in the next few months. All these ideas can come together. We can make progress.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the bill because it truly represents an opportunity for me and my constituents, for all Canadians and the rest of the world.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, countries around the world have taken different pursuits. Many of the countries in western Europe have moved very well toward meeting their Kyoto targets. It is my understanding that the required long term targets are going to be negotiated over the next session of the Kyoto accord. We are going to see this expand. It is very positive that Canada has agreed to a long term target.

What we really have to do with this legislation right now, and I think we all agree, is set short term targets that can start right away, that deliver results and that move the Canadian economy in a different direction. We need to make these moves now. Setting the required short term targets is the most important thing to do.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, the tar sands are an important part of Canada's economic future. At the same time, the issues in the tar sands with respect to the use of energy have not been addressed. We have not seen movement on the development of technologies for CO₂ sequestration. We have yet to see the proper implementation of water management plants.

Living in the area and travelling through the tar sands for the past 20 years, I have seen the air pollution that comes from them. I cannot imagine the kind of situation we will have in northern Alberta and the southern Northwest Territories, if these are five times their size, with that kind of pollution going on. We need to set targets right now for the tar sands as well. If those targets cannot be met with their existing expansion, then we need a moratorium on them to ensure that the technology going into there, the developments taking place there are not going to add to the problem that we have with the tar sands.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to describe the electrical grid in Canada in such short time. The provincial premiers recognize the need for this infrastructure development. The actual form of this should be taken in the energy strategy that comes forward from the government. We are waiting for that strategy through Natural Resources Canada. The government should be talking about those issues and putting those deals together.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Yukon and I are from the same area and have the same issues surrounding climate change and are very concerned about it.

The member speaks to a lot of programs that could have been but when we look at the record of the carbon sequestration program that he was talking about, the Commissioner for Sustainable Development indicated that it missed its greenhouse gas reduction target. It was supposed to be 3.5 megatonnes and it turned in at 0.08 megatonnes. That suggests that there was some work to do there.

At the same time, at the natural resources committee we are hearing evidence that it will be about \$100 a tonne for the sequestration of CO₂ in the tar sands. This is quite a large figure.

We must be careful when we talk about these programs that have been put into place in the past because we really need some regulation and that is not what the government provided there. When we talked about getting the lead out of gasoline, we did it through legislation and it happened immediately. There is no lead in the gasoline.

Does the member not recognize how important it is to put in legislation that will bind us to getting results for the Canadian public?

....

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Thursday, December 7, 2006

Bank Act

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I come from a northern part of Canada where banking services are limited in many small rural and remote communities and limited to the extreme. In some cases, people need to air freight their cheque to another community and have it cashed there and then returned to them, which is a huge expense.

Within any amendments that are being made to the acts governing the banks, I would think that we would want to see some attention paid to ensuring that there is some universality in some of the basic banking services across this country, especially in rural and remote communities. It may be that it will require some amendments to the act that would allow banks to provide more online services. I would say that there are things that could be done.

Although we have competition in the banking field, we do have very large companies that dominate the market. The banking industry needs to have some responsibility toward Canadians to ensure their services are available in all parts of this country.

Could the hon. member comment on how these amendments to the act will help people in rural and remote communities?

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

EDITED HANSARD • NUMBER 094

CONTENTS

Friday, December 8, 2006

Budget Implementation Act, 2006, No. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, be read the third time and passed.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his thoughtful dissertation on the green economy and all the things we could do within it. Certainly, we have to make choices. We have made some choices in the past. One of the choices the Liberal administration made in the last few years, which was backed up by the Conservatives when they got in, was to encourage the development of liquefied natural gas terminals in Canada. These terminals would bring gas from other countries to Canada at very high environmental cost in terms of the CO₂ emissions to get the gas here. As early as May, the North American Energy Working Group was busy continuing this plan to develop the infrastructure of delivery of another fossil fuel from somewhere else.

As a Liberal member of cabinet before, does he now see the error in supporting the development of this new fossil fuel energy source for this country? It exports money and

creates pollution in other countries. Does he think this is the kind of thing with which we should be moving ahead if we are really, truly talking about a green economy in Canada?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned some issues surrounding the fiscal imbalance and the tax points that he would like to see as part of this fiscal imbalance and how we can move money from the federal government to the provinces.

In this budget and in the budgets of the Liberal Party prior to this one, for many years we have seen reductions in corporate tax rates and that has not allowed provinces to pick up tax points.

Corporations in this country are free to file their tax returns in whatever province they want. In my territory, the Northwest Territories, we have had extreme difficulty with our fiscal situation when we adjust the corporate tax rate. Either we scare off all the corporations and they run to another province to file or we lower the rate and they run to us.

I would like my hon. colleague to speak to how we can deal with the corporate tax rate in Canada that is applied in provinces. Do we not need some kind of agreement across the country to fix the corporate tax rate that will apply and will prevent these corporations from treating us as pawns in their game to reduce their after tax rate?

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak in this budget debate. I noted with interest some of the comments the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance made at the beginning of her speech. She set the tone that the government wanted to follow. With this bill, she felt it was opening up new opportunities for Canadians to be better served in the tax system and she spoke to a number of specific instances of that.

She also spoke of the importance of working Canadians as part of the whole tax structure, and in a way we all are. Working Canadians are the wealth creators. I come from a region of the country which is doing very well in creating wealth for Canadians, with the diamonds, oil and gas in the Northwest Territories. We are starting to push a lot of wealth into the rest of the country.

We can look the oil and gas industry in northern B.C. and say the same thing. People working in that part of the country are creating a lot of wealth for the country. We could say the same thing about northern Alberta. We can go to northern Saskatchewan where the uranium mines are now pumping out enormous profits, another indicator of wealth creation.

The development of hydroelectric power in Manitoba will create more wealth. The northern Ontario diamond mines, the potential great hydroelectric developments in Quebec, the Labrador nickel, and the list goes on, create more wealth. Throughout northern Canada, working people create wealth for the rest of the country. Wealth is a good thing; it makes our world work.

Within the concept of that, we need workers in the north. We need people to live, work raise their families and have a normal life there, just like every other Canadian. That is very important. It creates wealth and helps the whole country out.

In the mid-eighties we had some pretty far-sighted Conservatives in the Mulroney government who realized it was important that northerners be well protected in terms of their ability to live and work. To their great credit, they created what was called the northern residents' tax deduction. That spoke to fairness.

However, when we look at 2006, and in preparation for next year's budget, we need to talk about what the north needs. We need measures to deal with the high cost of living. The tax deduction created in 1986 and remains the same amount in 2006 does not accomplish that purpose. It does not deliver that for northerners any more.

According to information provided by the NWT Bureau of Statistics, a food item which costs \$1 in Yellowknife, on average costs \$1.35 in Fort Liard, \$1.70 in Wekweti, \$1.91 in

Fort Good Hope and \$2.22 in Pawitik. These increased costs do not reflect the fact that the costs of items in Yellowknife are already significantly higher than southern Canadian cities like Edmonton.

On average, households of northerners spend \$15,000 more per year on living essentials than other Canadians. Some will argue that higher northern wages make up for these increased costs. If we were talking about a time many years ago, we might say that was the case. However, when we look at Statistics Canada and we look at the wages across the country, we see it is not the case.

(1320)

The other day I had the opportunity to travel on a plane with a young fellow from Newfoundland who had worked in northern Canada and in Alberta. When I asked him if he was better paid in the north, he said that his paycheque was larger for less work in Alberta than it was when he worked at the diamond mines in the Northwest Territories. This young fellow was a skilled tradesman whose skills could be used anywhere in the country. It is not working for northerners any more.

High wages are not really the answer. It is not about that. High wages only benefit those who have a job which pays well. For the unemployed and the working poor, the high cost in the north only adds to their burdens. The majority of people in northern communities across the country are working for very low wages in very substandard conditions.

Some would say that the much promoted cut to the GST has helped northerners to deal with the high cost of living. In reality, the 1% cut lowered the price of a cup of coffee in Yellowknife by a whopping 1%. A 1¢ drop in the price of a cup of coffee really helps when the price of a litre of milk is \$4 or \$5 and when someone needs a loan to buy fresh fruit, vegetables and groceries. The GST is very perverse in what it does to northern communities where the cost of living is high. Northerners pay more GST for every item they buy than southerners. In some respects, we in the north pay more taxes than those who live in the southern part of Canada. The GST, the tax on consumption, exacerbates that issue.

If the government really wants to help northerners, and I am talking about northerners in every province and territory, then it should increase the northern residents tax deduction. This is a pretty simple thing to do.

As many members know, since being elected to the House, I have called for the northern residents tax deduction to be increased by 50%, with future increases indexed to a northern inflationary measure. It has been estimated that for each increase of \$1,000 to the deduction, \$3 million would be put back into the pockets of northerners.

If the Minister of Finance cannot take my advice, then perhaps he will take the advice of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. At its annual general meeting in Saskatoon, chamber members, those very progressive and enlightened people we all know as the backbone of the country with their large and small businesses, voted to support the federal government in: reviewing the provisions allowing for income tax deductions for northern residents and increasing the housing deduction to reflect the actual inflation index costs of housing in northern areas; reducing record burdens by eliminating the current employer specified vacation travel deduction and replacing it with a standardized inflation indexed northern vacation deduction based on the number of people in the taxpayer's household and the area of residence; and dispensing with the limit on medical travel being the lowest return air fare and allowing northern taxpayers the deduction for their actual costs incurred in medical travel.

These tremendously progressive statements came from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. I thank the members for those statements. I thank them for their support because they truly recognize that northern workers are making a difference to our economy. They will continue to add wealth into the country and will continue to support the efforts of southern Canadians to live in a good fashion.

Maybe the Minister of Finance will take the advice of the legislative assembly in the Northwest Territories that unanimously supported a motion to increase the deduction.

Also calling for this change is the NWT Chamber of Commerce and the Hay River Chamber of Commerce. The head of the Hay River Chamber of Commerce said:

Hay River is experiencing a period of rapid economic growth, but to sustain this prosperity we must retain and attract residents.

He went on to point out that in order to address this need for residents, there must be an increase in the northern residents tax deduction. What a good idea.

I do not know if the federal government realizes this, but if we pay the cost of flying people in and out of the north, that adds to the company's costs and reduces its taxes, which go back to the federal government.

(1325)

By encouraging northerners to live in the north, we are going to improve the financial viability of companies and we are going to see a return to the federal government. That is not a bad idea; it is a good idea. This is what we want to create in our country.

Increasing the northern residents' tax deduction will help ordinary northerners, but more is needed, and I will not stop there. I speak to that first because it is an issue for people and people first is the way our party deals with things. We also need to speak to the increased need of funding to our territorial governments.

During the election, the Prime Minister wrote to the Premier of the Northwest Territories, saying:

We recognize the unique circumstances faced in the North regarding the delivery of programs and services to residents [in small, remote communities] and we are prepared to discuss the challenges regarding the costs and circumstances for the delivery of those services.

I appreciate the Prime Minister's comments. We all appreciate them. We want them backed up in the budgets of the government so they reflect what the Prime Minister said. That seems to be pretty straightforward. The government has had plenty of time to talk. It has had an expert panel report, advising how to change the funding formulas for the territories.

The Northwest Territories has identified four key issues that stand in the way of the north achieving its full potential. First among them is a need for a new fiscal relationship with Ottawa, one that reflects the needs of the Northwest Territories. The current fiscal arrangement simply cannot continue. They are deep-seated. Our territorial government, representing the full number of the people in the Northwest Territories, can only borrow up to \$300 million. Most of that is tied up already in debt on public utility systems, which of course it has to provide.

....

39th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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CONTENTS

Monday, December 11, 2006

Budget Implementation Act, 2006, No. 2

The House resumed from December 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, be read the third time and passed.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, during my previous speech I spoke about the serious issue of tax fairness for northern people. As I indicated, the other issue that I wanted to speak to in this discussion regarding northern issues is the need to change the way that we are funding northern territories. We have had an expert panel reporting on how to change the funding formula for the territories, and I had just started in on this when my time was up on Friday.

I will just repeat that we have identified four key issues that stand in the way of the north achieving its full potential.

The first is a new fiscal arrangement with Ottawa, one that truly reflects the needs of the Northwest Territories. The current fiscal arrangement cannot continue. Not only is it inadequate but in many ways it acts as a disincentive to the Northwest Territories moving forward.

My territory is very much controlled by this august Parliament, unlike the other provinces and regions of this country. This Parliament really does play such an important role in what happens in the north. As a northerner, I have railed against that for my whole life. I have felt, in some ways, the inadequacy of my citizenship, living where I do in the north. Certainly, part of it is the way that the Government of Canada deals with northerners.

As such, we all hope that as the resources of our territory are extracted and developed, they will mean more self-determination for us as citizens of the north. There is no question about that. If our resources simply get taken and we end up, at the end of the day, with what we have now, that would be a tremendous letdown and a tremendous failure of the Canadian system which is to recognize that we are all equal across this country and that we all have equal political rights.

The federal government provides about 70% of the funds for the Northwest Territories, but that really does not make the NWT a have region because this government, not the northerners, owns the vast riches of the territories. Nearly as much goes to Ottawa in royalties, in land sales and in corporate taxation. Nearly as much goes to Ottawa right now from the Northwest Territories as comes in to the Northwest Territories.

With a proper fiscal regime that would put our resources on the same level as other provinces where governments collect considerably more royalty revenues, we would be in a positive situation in the Northwest Territories. We would be ahead of the game.

The Government of Canada has chosen to subsidize businesses that develop in the north at the expense of royalties and taxation that could make the difference between us being a have and a have not province. Province is a term I use somewhat lightly because we are a province in waiting. In the Prime Minister's letter to the NWT, he wrote:

The Conservative Party of Canada agrees unequivocally with the principle that northerners should be the primary beneficiaries of the revenues generated by resource development in the Northwest Territories similar to other jurisdictions in Canada. We also agree that the transfer of authority over lands and resources from Canada to the Northwest Territories (devolution) is the next logical step in the political development of the Northwest Territories.

Northerners would really like to know when this is going to happen and how this is going to happen. If this is the mandate of the Government of Canada, will it say it very clearly to its new emissary, Mr. Harvie Andre?

(1205)

In 2004-05, public accounts showed that the federal government took in over \$270 million in royalties and resource revenue from the Northwest Territories and the amount is growing every year. That amount went up quite a bit last year as well. Those figures have not come out, but that is because our second diamond mine is now into production. At the same time that does not include the corporate taxation that goes with that.

In comparison, the Northwest Territories public accounts showed only \$3.5 million in corporate income taxes in that same year. This goes back to a problem that we have just like every other province or political region in the Northwest Territories and that is, if we set our corporate tax rate a little higher than anyone else, then of course the corporations are all filing somewhere else.

We have bounced around over the years because where we had huge surpluses, we lowered the rate and then everyone followed us down and then we balanced out. Then we raised the rate and then we got nothing. That is a fundamental problem with the tax system in Canada which should be addressed by the federal government. There should be some federal-provincial understanding on corporate taxation to avoid this kind of loophole, to avoid this kind of competition that takes the money out of the hands of the provinces and the regions.

People in the north simply want a fair deal from Canada in how our interests are treated. Whether it is on taxation or funding for government programs and services, we actually want to benefit and build our territory on the resources that we have. We want to make that happen for Canadians for the future. I hope in the future that the government will do much better than this budget in dealing with northern concerns and issues. The improvement has to take place.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington:

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague sometimes blends into the windows that are behind him.

....

Mr. Dennis Bevington: And he is so shy that it makes it difficult.

There are fundamental differences in the Northwest Territories, which is an autonomous region and which theoretically, quite plausibly, along with northern Ontario should be a province in waiting.

What is not different about those areas is what the member alluded to. He said that when the government does not pay attention to the northern regions, when it allows them to be exploited without building the infrastructure and proper communities, without making the things happen that will leave behind substance, we end up with something far less satisfactory.

When the government does not do that and we allow ourselves to be manipulated by government and large corporations into doing things in the cheap and dirty fashion, which has been the practice for the last 20 years and which is a practice that has to stop in this country, we end up with something that is far less satisfactory than what we have.

I know that the hon. member's riding has representation at Queen's Park. Ontario is one of the dominant provinces of Canada. How these conditions can go on in this region year after year is something that really shocks me.

In my own territory, I can always blame it on Ottawa. I am able to say that Ottawa is not doing its share. My colleague has to deal with that provincial relationship.

What binds us across the north are the things that the federal government is able to do. I spoke about this earlier when I talked about tax fairness. We need some fairness in the system. The federal government agreed in the 1980s that it was fair to offer northerners right across the country an extra tax break because of their high costs. The government has recognized northern and remote communities in Parliament and in our taxation. What we need to do is to make it fair again.

....
