

Transcript of Dennis Bevington's speech in the House of Commons on Thursday, Feb. 1, follow-up questions and his responses.

This speech was made in response to a motion from Stephane Dion on Kyoto.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP) :

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Sydney-Victoria. Members of the Liberal Party have been waving around a five year old letter from the Prime Minister when he was Leader of the Alliance Party. In this letter the Prime Minister made statements about Kyoto being a socialist plan to export Canadian wealth.

Yesterday it was the only question the Liberals could ask in the House, but both the Prime Minister and the Liberals are wrong. Shipping Canadian dollars to other countries, as the Liberals would have done, to meet Kyoto is actually a capitalist plan. It is a plan to ensure that corporations can continue to expand their markets and find a way to deal with Kyoto at the lowest possible cost without any worry about the effect on the global environment.

All around the world the successful countries that have dealt with climate change are social democratic countries which have values which the NDP also has. We have a plan to meet Kyoto and it is a plan based on social democratic principles which will build the Canadian economy, create jobs for average Canadians and save working families money on their energy bills.

One of the key elements in the NDP plan is to change how we deal with energy. Canada needs an energy strategy. We need to ensure there is clean energy available not just for today but for our children and grandchildren, not a plan that allows a laissez-faire system to exist in this country to recklessly produce and sell off our fossil fuel resources.

What would a strategy look like? The primary goal of an energy strategy must be to provide a secure energy supply sufficient to meet our needs. However these needs primarily must be reduced. By reducing the needs it will enable the most rapid transition as possible to an energy regime based on conservation and the sustainable use of renewable energy.

The goal of an energy policy must definitely not be merely to produce as much energy as possible to meet a growing global demand with no regard for social and environmental impacts. Conservation and reduction of energy consumption must be one of the pillars of an energy strategy. Consuming less energy will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce air pollution and save ordinary Canadians money. Those are all laudable goals.

The second pillar of an energy strategy is to replace non renewable energy sources with renewable ones. To do this our strategy would include actions of course to develop a thriving renewable energy industry in Canada, particularly small hydro, solar and biomass. All of these are possible, all of these are important and all of these can happen in our system.

We need the creation of a crown corporation to assist communities, commercial and industrial interests at the community level, to help create these kinds of energy which are not transported mainly by pipes or transmission lines but really deal with how we use energy at home and in the community.

We need to install one hundred thousand solar roofs to get our solar energy program going. We are falling behind the rest of the world. Our country has an abysmal record of supporting solar energy.

We need to invest in co-generation. One of the simplest and most fundamental ways that northern countries save energy is co-generation; use the waste heat that is produced in industrial and electrical processes.

We need investment in sustainable public transport.

We need to provide funding to support the development of community groups and non-profit organizations to promote activities which have these values and put these values in front of Canadians which allow small businesses, individuals and community governments to make the best of the energy systems that are available to them.

A gradual transition to a sustainable renewable energy regime allowing maximum use of attrition and ensuring planned decreases in production can be accomplished and save jobs which can provide a reasonable transition to a new economy.

However, any strategy for Canada would be incomplete if it did not address fossil fuels. When we talk about addressing fossil fuels I do not think we only want to talk about bringing liquefied natural gas into this country to replace a rapidly declining resource that was so mishandled through the 1980s and 1990s by successive Liberal governments.

The NDP strategy would conduct a complete assessment of federal subsidy and incentives to the energy sector, with input from relevant stakeholders, accompanied by the establishment of a specific timetable for the rapid elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies and incentives, particularly those associated with the oil and gas industry.

In order to share my time with my hon. colleague for Victoria I will come to a conclusion. I want to say that an energy strategy for Canada must put Canada's energy needs first, not those of the United States, not made in Washington with the North American energy working group giving direction to this country.

We need our own energy strategy. We need it in conjunction with the Kyoto plan. Without that energy strategy we will not get to Kyoto.

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Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener-Waterloo, Lib.) :

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with my colleague that we really have to utilize alternate energy resources.

My question for my colleague is when the Prime Minister was asked by Elizabeth May, the leader of the Green Party, why she disliked the leader of the NDP so much, she responded very direct. She said it was because he conspired with the Conservatives to bring down the Liberal government on the eve of the climate change conference that was being managed for Canada by the present Liberal leader.

My question for my colleague is would he not agree with me that 2006 was a total waste of the Kyoto protocol because the NDP was instrumental in bringing down the Liberal government?

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Mr. Dennis Bevington :

Mr. Speaker, throughout this debate today we have heard constant accusations on both sides. Of course the Liberals want to bring the New Democratic Party into the game they are playing with the Conservatives of who is at fault here.

The NDP is not interested in who is at fault here. We are here to do something for Canadians right now.

When we look at the Liberal record over many years on many subjects and we look at the old saying which makes sense here, what is the best indicator of future performance, it is the past performance. When we look at the past performance of the Liberal Party over 13 years it was strictly a sham. How could anyone use the promises of that party in 2005 to judge their relevance for staying in office?

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Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay, NDP) :

Mr. Speaker, I would ask my hon. colleague if he would illuminate, especially for people back home who are watching this important debate and who may find it confusing, the two fundamental questions that are constantly being skipped over and not answered.

In terms of the Conservative Party the fundamental question is whether they really believe the science of climate change. Do the Conservatives really believe in greenhouse gases or, as the Prime Minister says the so-called greenhouses gases. When the Conservatives are pushed on this they change the subject.

However, the equally disturbing game that is being played is we ask the Liberal Party what actual steps it will take to get something done in terms of working on an all party committee to bring in clear regulations. When we ask the Liberal Party this question they throw it around and say that it is the NDP or something else. The Liberals will not answer the question.

I want to ask my friend why he thinks that the two main parties continue to play games in the House today and refuse to answer straightforward questions?

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau) :

The hon. member for Western Arctic. I would appreciate a short answer because I would like to fit in another question.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington :

Yes of course, Mr. Speaker. I think the situation is such that energy, the environment and climate change are the important issues right now. There is the thought that we will come to a solution in this Parliament and that the four parties working together would take this out of the next campaign when we are in front of the voters.

The Liberals want to keep some doubt in this process and I think that is something that is shameful. Let us get on with this and get it done. There are four parties here that are willing to work. Let us put this political partisanship--

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau) :

The hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt should be mindful that there is a minute for both the question and the answer.

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Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon-Humboldt, CPC) :

I will make it very short, Mr. Speaker. I was interested to listening to the ping pong of accusations between the Liberals and the NDP and I wonder if the hon. member was aware that when the Kyoto accord was ratified, the NDP government of Saskatchewan was opposed to Kyoto.

Cabinet ministers criticized it. So, while it is fine for New Democrats in opposition to say one thing but when they are in government they do something else. I wonder if my hon. friend was aware of that fact.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau) :

The hon. member for Western Arctic. We are running out the clock but I will allow you a moment to reply.

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Mr. Dennis Bevington :

Mr. Speaker, once again, none of this assists us in bringing forward the kinds of policies that are required to go in the clean air act and to make this work for Canadians.

We are not living in the past. This is 2007. We need to move. Let us move on this issue. Let us make it happen.

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For more information contact:
Tara L. Kearsey
Communications Assistant
Dennis Bevington, Western Arctic MP
1-800-661-0802 - toll free
www.dennisbevington.ca