



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES

**STATEMENT BY  
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BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009  
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2009**

Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the budget implementation bill, a bill that covers a budget which really has no vision or direction. It is a budget that represents a scattergun approach to stimulating the economy, one which, at the end of the day after a considerable sum of taxpayers' money has been spent, will not have accomplished what is needed to be accomplished.

It was clear from the very beginning with the economic statement in December that this type of situation would happen, that we would be faced with a budget that simply would not do the job. We cannot expect Conservative ideology to turn around in two months. I am sorry, but that will not happen. We cannot expect that people who have built their dogmatic behaviour around the confines of neo-conservatism would use the finances of this country to provide what Canada needs.

We in the NDP knew that. That is why we formed the coalition in December. We knew very well that in January we would not get what was needed for this economy. Today we hear the Liberals say the same thing. They supported the Conservatives last week for political reasons, but today they are saying the same thing, that the budget is not adequate, that it is not enough. We knew that before. We did not have to wait until the budget was presented. We understand the Conservatives after three years in opposition to them in Parliament.

Once again we saw the mean-spiritedness of a government that would create a budget bill designed to stimulate the economy and get the economy working full of measures that have nothing to do with that, measures that really preserve the Conservative ideological base in this country, to pander to that type of support. We see that so clearly.

Bill C-10 attacks women through its assault on pay equity. It really provides nothing for women who are out of work. We do not see any improvement in EI. We do not see a more understanding nature around child care. We do not see any of that vision that people who are going to be most disenfranchised during this downturn in the economy need to have.

It tears up collective agreements. My inbox was full of emails from RCMP officers in my riding in the Northwest Territories. They said that not only did the government cut the collective agreement for all of Canada, but it also picked on the extra money that is provided as support for the RCMP in carrying out law and order in very isolated places. I wish the Prime Minister and his cabinet would have gone into a grocery store in Inuvik before the election and looked at the prices of goods for northerners. Perhaps then they would understand what it means when there are cutbacks for the professionals who come in to take care of our communities and provide the services which we hear the Conservatives talk about so eloquently when it comes to taking credit for anything they do.

This budget weakens control on foreign ownership, especially Air Canada. The aviation industry is so transportable. Many of the workers can be replaced by people in other countries. The maintenance work can be done in places that will provide no benefit to our country. We need to hold on to the ownership of our aviation industry. That is not happening. This budget would actually change that.

It attacks student loan recipients. How low do we want to go? How low do we take this? Today I am going to move away from that and talk about how the bill attacks the environment through its changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

I was in committee the other day when the minister took great pains to say how old this act was, that it dated from the time of our first prime minister. He seemed to have disdain for it because of its age, that this was a good reason to move on from it, to change to something different.

The fact that this law is one of the oldest on the books says to me how important the protection of Canada's waterways is. The role of a national government in protecting its waters dates well before Confederation. There were provisions in the Magna Carta protecting against the construction of fish weirs across the rivers in England. We know that from day one it is so important to look at how our rivers are being taken care of. Despite this historic precedent as to how important the role of a national government is in protecting water systems, the government wants to eviscerate protection for Canada's waterways. Under the changes the Conservatives want to make, rivers would only be considered navigable under the sole discretion of the minister. There would be no consultation, no forewarning and no appeal, not even any limitation on the type of waterway which could be excluded.

Under these amendments, it is conceivable the minister could declare that the St. Lawrence is not a navigable waterway. What kind of power and authority are we turning over to the minister in this regard? What is this about? We would also turn over to the minister the sole discretion to determine whether any proposed work would have an impact on navigation, once again without prior consultation, no warning and no appeal. With this type of amendment, large structures, such as dams across a river, depending on where they are located and which river they are on, could be considered as not having any impact on navigation.

The amendments give the minister the authority to change at any time the criteria used in assessing whether a waterway is navigable or whether a type of work may interfere with navigation, once again without the ability of Canadians to say anything about it, without

any ability to appeal these types of decisions on these waterways which so many Canadians hold sacred.

Canadians identify with their rivers. They identify with the land, the water. Nature is so important to all of us. Why would Canadians want this type of legislation put in place? The minister said that these changes need to be made because the law has been holding up vital infrastructure projects. Can the minister name one project that has not gone ahead because of the Navigable Waters Protection Act?

Why has the Conservative government put this odious change to the laws which protect Canada's natural environment into a budget bill? Could it be because the Conservatives know Canadians will oppose these changes and will voice strong opposition? The Conservatives sneak it in through the back door knowing that the Liberals will support it in order to get the budget passed. This is how they are working.

When the Navigable Waters Protection Act was reviewed by the transport committee in the last Parliament, the committee recommended more consultations, especially with aboriginal people, recreational users, anglers, canoeists, tourist operators, cottagers, and river advocacy groups. Only one group like that was represented in the committee discussions.

The government likes to say it is here for the people, but if it does not listen to the people, it is not here for them.

Another way the government is not listening is in its approach to stimulating the economy of the Northwest Territories. For years the people and the Government of Nunavut have been calling for a deep sea port at Iqaluit. Instead, the government is pouring \$17 million into a harbour in Pangnirtung, on top of the already existing contribution of \$8 million last year.

After the budget was released, the Premier of Nunavut asked about the funding and was told to use it or lose it, that a port in Iqaluit would take too long. Pangnirtung needs a small craft harbour and it should get an excellent one for \$25 million, but all of Nunavut needs a harbour in Iqaluit as well, and that funding could have gone toward making that a reality. Why did they not do it? The Conservatives think they know better than the people of the north.