

Dennis Bevington

Member of Parliament Western Arctic

Community Newsletter Spring 2012

Dear friends,

We have just completed a very eventful winter in Parliament, across Canada, and in the world. When this is received in your mailbox, the House of Commons will be in recess for the summer after going through a very contentious process with the Conservative budget. This budget not only has cut government services, but has changed many of the programs and services that Canadians have come to rely on from their federal government. From pensions and employment insurance, to environmental protection and national parks, the changes in one single bill (called an omnibus bill), this spring, have been rushed through the House. This process has been hard to accept as so many important issues simply have not had the debate that they should have. We are fundamentally seeing our country change in so many ways, without the interactive process that we consider democratic.

Our Official Opposition has been very active throughout the winter, but with the election of Thomas Mulcair, the NDP is whole again. Mr. Mulcair was the choice of New Democrats in March and since then he has been highly visible as the new Leader of the Official Opposition. His firm stand on the urgent need to clean up the pollution that is currently

affecting northern Canada from the Alberta Oil Sands is certainly welcome to most northerners. Tom Mulcair has shown by appointing me a full critic of Northern Development in his Shadow Cabinet his respect for the importance of our unique issues. In the NWT, energy in its many forms remains one of our most contentious and dominating issues.

For NWT consumers, high prices for fuel oil and the imminent collapse of the natural gas supply in Inuvik and Norman Wells has sent people searching for different forms of energy. For individuals and small businesses, the challenge will be to make changes to improve the energy efficiency of all aspects of life and business. Unfortunately the Conservative Government has chosen to shut down the federal programs that they had in place to assist people in making these improvements. Through the Arctic Energy Alliance in Yellowknife, programs from the GNWT can be accessed.

I wish you all the best for the summer and hope to see you in your community.

Dennis

Dennis Bevington Member of Parliament – Western Arctic question in the House of Commons on June 1, 2012.

“Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' hastily announced hunting and angling advisory panel has angered Canada's first nations, Métis and Inuit with their exclusion. They see this action as another attempt by the government to cut them out of environmental decision-making.

This is similar to the way the Conservatives want to dismantle environmental review boards in the Northwest Territories. At the same time, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development will not reappoint the Inuit chair of the Nunavut Impact Review Board. Why do the Conservatives want to shut out First Nations, Métis and Inuit from roles in protecting their lands and their resources?”

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):

“Mr. Speaker, this is about supporting the traditional practices in Canada of hunting and fishing. This includes the ability of people to engage in those traditional practices, practices that were being interfered with by the very policies supported by that member and the NDP in terms of Canada's long gun registry.

We have taken steps to ensure that the long gun registry is now out of the way so that those traditional rights can be preserved. We are going to have an ongoing dialogue. We are certainly happy to look at others who are interested in supporting those same traditional Canadian values of hunting and fishing.”



Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington and NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair. Photo taken: May 17, 2012, Ottawa, ON.

Inside:

Bill C-38...p.2

Dismantling Canadian Library System...p.3

Question on NWT Borrowing Limits...p.3

Upcoming Community Assemblies:

Dene National Assembly-Whati July 2-6, 2012

Tlicho Assembly-Wekweeti July 10-12, 2012

Gwich'in Assembly & Gathering-Fort McPherson August 13-17, 2012

Akaiicho Assembly-Yellowknife River August 14-16, 2012



Wendy Bisaro, MLA Frame Lake, Tom Beaulieu, MLA Tu Nede and Dennis Bevington, Member of Parliament-Western Arctic at the Legislative Assembly building in Yellowknife.

Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington speaks on Bill C-38 in the House of Commons on May 5, 2012

There are so many things wrong with C-38 the Conservative's budget implementation bill which would lead me to vote against it. Wrong headed elements such as the total rewriting of Canada's environmental protection law, is a very serious issue for the territories.

As the only member of the opposition from the three northern territories, I must focus on the changes to the constitutions of the three territories; the Yukon Act, Northwest Territories Act and Nunavut Act. Buried deep inside the bill are changes to the borrowing provisions for all of the territories. These changes will result in increased federal control over the NWT, Yukon and Nunavut.

The issue here is these amendments increase federal control over the territories not whether the borrowing should be increased. In my view the only body which should control the borrowing of the territories is the legislative assemblies of the three territories.

These changes will continue the federal control and enable the federal cabinet to determine what constitutes borrowing, the entities or classes of entities which apply to the borrowing limit and the manner in which the value of borrowing is determined.

The amendments are the outcome of a behind-closed-doors review of the territorial borrowing limits to clarify the definitions used by all three territories with respect to what constitutes borrowing for the purposes of the limits. This review came from a 2006 request from the Government of the Northwest Territories that the borrowing limit be changed to reflect the approach to debt and borrowing that the GNWT has adopted in its fiscal responsibility policy.

Testifying before a House of Commons committee then Government of the NWT deputy minister of Finance, Margaret Melhorn said, "This requirement for federal approval to borrow is a shortcoming in the NWT Act. We would prefer either to eliminate the requirement altogether or to base it on provisions similar to our fiscal responsibility policy."

Instead of presenting these amendments in separate bills, allowing Northerners to have their input into the changes of their constitutions, the Conservatives have rolled them into an omnibus bill with only one aim; to drive as many changes to Canadian society through Parliament without any proper review as fast as possible.

It is unacceptable that the Conservatives would violate the fourth pillar of their own Northern policy (Improving and Devolving Northern Governance) by unilaterally changing the constitutions of the three territories without a public consultation process. Northerners must make it clear to the government that they do not support increased federal control and are unwilling to accept an undemocratic process to amend their constitutions.



Back row: Dakota Miller, Nathaniel Gregory, Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington, Devin Roberts, Sarah Rose, front: Gregor McGregor. Dakota, Nathaniel and Sarah are in the Grad 2012 class at the Mackenzie Mountain School in Norman Wells, NT.

Photo credit: Josh Rose

Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington question in the House of Commons on May 16, 2012 on the Government of the Northwest Territories borrowing limits

"Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development misled this House when he said a vote against the budget bill is a vote against increasing the borrowing limits of the three territories.

The minister needs to do his homework, because in no way would the bill set borrowing limits. What the Trojan Horse budget bill would do is change the three northern constitutions to increase federal control. Is the minister completely out of touch with what his government is trying to do, or was he trying to mislead the House?"

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):

"Mr. Speaker, our government is taking steps to improve the economy in the north and in the Northwest Territories by cutting red tape for mineral exploration project approvals. We want northerners to benefit from economic development opportunities that major resource projects can offer.

Despite the efforts of the NDP and Liberal members, who vote against progress and development in the north, our government is working hard with northerners to ensure they have full, vital, dynamic and strong economic futures."

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Conservatives dismantling Canadian Library system

I was pleased to support Bill C-321, a bill that my colleague from Brandon—Souris has put forward on a number of occasions in this House of Commons. This bill will enshrine in law the reduced postal rate for shipping library materials.

Since 1939, Canada Post has set a reduced postal rate for library materials. However, this is under a corporate policy. It is not under legislation.

Over 2,000 libraries regularly use the library book rate. The library book rate is not a government program and it is not currently financed by the Conservative government.

The ability of Canada's libraries to transfer materials across the country at a low rate allows Canadians in rural and remote locations to have access to the same materials as those who live in large urban centres. For me, growing up in the Northwest Territories when libraries were the dominant form of knowledge and information, this service was absolutely required.

Through this program, the Ulukhaktok Community Library on Victoria Island in the High Arctic has the same access to library materials as the Toronto Public Library, through the national libraries.

The rate contributes to the public policy goals of literacy, lifelong learning and vibrant rural and remote communities. Of course, the new information age has assisted greatly in communities across northern Canada.

Access to knowledge is an essential part of democracy. However, in this latest Conservative budget, we see that the Conservatives are opposed to knowledge. They are opposed to the dissemination of knowledge. They are opposed to the collection of knowledge on the part of the public.

I want to speak specifically to libraries because the Conservatives are also gutting the National Library Service, the very repository of knowledge and information and the very people who not only collect the knowledge but also create ways to disseminate the knowledge across the country to those thousands of libraries that exist in Canada.

Library and Archives Canada is subject to \$9.6 million in cuts over the next three years. Twenty per cent of the staff is being cut. This is a shameful situation in a country where the use of knowledge is so important to the development of our economy. The inter-library loan program is being cut. The very program that Bill C-321 would help support

Also, within these cuts, the national archival development program is being axed. The country's history is rich right across the whole country. We need this kind of archival development program in the NWT, especially because much of the history is oral and is not easily available.

We heard that libraries are being closed at many government departments. The libraries at Agriculture Canada, Environment Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Industry Canada, the National Capital Commission, National Defence, Public Works, the Public Service Commission and Transport Canada are gone.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has already announced the closure of its library.

Canadian Library Association president Karen Adams said, in part:

We have a situation where knowledge would be lost to Canadians; where the ability to deal with knowledge would be lost by Canadians; where the ability to understand what our country is all about, by Canadians through their public government, would disappear. Knowledge paid for. Knowledge that will be hard to collect.

What we see here would be the denigration of our library system right across this country. What is going on this country today? What is the purpose of denying Canadians access to knowledge?

Can the government ask those fundamental questions? Did it ask those fundamental questions or would it, in an idealistic orgy of cutting, just simply cut out this particular piece of our Canadian heritage and our Canadian future?

I support this bill, but I do not support what the Conservatives are doing to information services in this country.

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required

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Congratulatory Messages

On request, the Queen, the Governor General of Canada, the Prime Minister and your Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington can send congratulatory letters and certificates to Canadians celebrating significant anniversaries, wedding or birthdays.

Contact us at: 1-800-661-0802 or 1-866-992-4587

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 11

Anniversaries: 60 years or more

Birthdays 100 years or more

(3 months notice required including marriage or birth certificate)

Governor General of Canada

Anniversaries: 50 to 59 years

Birthdays 90-99

(2 months notice)

Prime Minister of Canada

Anniversaries: 25 years or more

Birthdays 75 years or more

(2 months notice)



Students from Ecole Allain St. Cyr and College Saint-Charles Garnier from Quebec. They took part in a linguistic exchange on March 23-April 1st in Yellowknife. The Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC) provides young Canadians, between the ages of 12-17 an opportunity to develop cultural awareness and experience the diversity of Canada's communities. For more information go to this website: www.sevec.ca



Brandon Okheena, Dennis Bevington MP Western Arctic, and Alex Akhiatak. Brandon won a silver medal and Alex won the bronze medal for Small Powered Equipment at the 14th Annual Territorial Skills competition held in Yellowknife on April 17, 2012

Below: Dennis Bevington, MP Western Arctic and Thomas Wright in Aklavik during the Gwichin 20th Anniversary celebration. Photo credit: Larry Frolick



Send us your comments:
