

## **MP Dennis Bevington's statement on Climate Change in the House of Commons on April 25, 2013.**

Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherbrooke. We have had a bit of debate about who is responsible. In reality, the responsibility for the development of the fossil fuel industry in our country lies with the Liberals. It was a Chrétien government, along with Ralph Klein, that set up the deal on the oil sands. That favourable tax deal and the lack of proper regulation drove the development of this industry, which is causing us extreme problems right now in our presence on the world stage and our greenhouse gas emissions. There is culpability on the part of both of these governments since 1995, dealing with the oil and gas industry.

I come from the north. We know about climate change. Environment Canada's temperature data for the Mackenzie Valley since 1951 has shown average temperature increases of 2.5° Celsius. For Inuvik, this data shows an annual increase of 3.1°. The average winter temperature increases are even greater. Inuvik has seen an increase of 5.8° Celsius over that period of time. Norman Wells and Yellowknife have seen average increases of 3.9° Celsius. We understand about climate change.

We understand the impact; whether it is on our forests, or on our permafrost, where in some cases we have lost 40% of it, or on the ice melt in the Arctic, of the changing conditions on our climate, the increased temperature causing those effects. The Mackenzie River spring melt and ice-free dates have advanced by about 20 days in the last century.

On September 26, 2012, our environment critic and I tried to have the House conduct an emergency debate on the rapidly decreasing amount of summer Arctic ice. Why did we do that? Because that summer, Canadians were experiencing, not just the north but the rest of Canada, the impacts of climate change. Why was that? Because things were changing and changing rapidly. Before we reach 2° Celsius, we will be impacted tremendously by climate change.

The United States had the highest August temperature since 1885 and droughts throughout the country. What caused that? A report by Jennifer Francis of Rutgers University and Stephen Vavrus of the University of Wisconsin showed that the extreme weather was directly related to the loss of Arctic summer ice cover. Arctic summer ice cover has dropped precipitously in the last decade, and it was at its lowest level last summer. It is 50% below what it was in 1979. It is adding heat to the ocean and the atmosphere to redirect the jet stream, the fast-moving, high altitude river of air that steers weather systems across the northern hemisphere.

The studies show that jet stream is behaving differently. It is becoming slower, with bigger troughs and ridges. This is causing major impacts to our climate. This is causing greater large-scale climate events like the storm, Sandy, that hit the New York coast.

I will not go into the details of why this is happening. Members can look on the website. They can find those details for themselves. This is an issue for all Canadians. The changing jet stream is the main culprit behind the extreme weather events that we see, so we know we will continue to see those major and extreme weather events moving forward. We need to understand how to deal with that in Canada.

I will take a step back now and talk about how we should be dealing with it in the north. It is clear the Conservatives and the Liberals before failed completely to deal with northern Canada and effectively with climate change, to help northerners reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and make their communities more sustainable.

Instead, governments looked on the north as a resource extraction area. That goes for both those governments. They both considered the north to be of prime importance. Instead of the north improving its situation, it will add to the world problem of climate change.

The other path that should be taken in the north is northern sustainability. Sustainability is a word thrown around to cover a variety of situations, from large industrial projects that support local employment and business to the allowable yield of wild animals for human consumption. As a long-time northerner, I would see sustainability defined as the ability to maintain a modest lifestyle that can be enhanced and made prosperous with the addition of carefully managed medium-term resource development projects. I want something that gives me confidence that my grandchildren will have a prosperous future. We need to look at how to change the North's reliance on fossil fuels.

Southern Canada has been in a bit of an artificial envelope because people use natural gas to heat their homes. The price of natural gas has not gone up in 10 years. In northern Canada, where people heat their homes with fuel oil, the increase in the last decade has been 400%. Considering the amount of heating required in the north, it is a big problem, a big problem that is not being solved, yet it is an issue that the government could deal with. It could work with the people in the north. Northerners are trying to make a difference there. The Government of the Northwest Territories has been very successful in converting many of its buildings to biomass. It has come out with a solar energy strategy. These are things that can help people in the north, but where is the federal government on this? It is not there yet.

Obsolete thinking about energy as an exportable, non-renewable resource has taken Canada out of step from where it should be. It is more involved in increasing greenhouse gas emissions in this global environment than simply within Canada. That is where we see the failure of the Conservative government right now.

What have been the actions of the Conservative government over the last year in terms of influencing the world on climate change?

It has stepped out of the UN committee dealing with desertification, one of the serious issues that is going to be in front of us with climate change. It has refused to deal in the House with the serious issues facing our weather systems.

The Arctic Council has worked for years to put climate change as the main item on its agenda. What is the new minister, who is taking over the chairmanship, talking about for the Arctic Council? She is saying we should talk about resource development. She is saying we should move this international body away from dealing with the impacts of climate change and more toward exploitive behaviour.

We have disengaged from Kyoto. We have given up on major agreements that can drive the rest of the world to join us in improving greenhouse gas emissions. We need to work together in this world. This is not a problem that can be solved in Canada by improving our efficiency or setting regulations for Canadians; this is a problem that has to be dealt with around the world.

Now the President of the United States is geared up for climate change. What major effort is Canada putting into the United States right now? We are trying to sell oil that has a large greenhouse gas profile attached to it. We are pushing it very hard in the United States. Where are we working with the United States on the issues surrounding greenhouse gas emissions? Where are we trying to deal with the President, who said that is going to be one of his major priorities?

We are religiously promoting the sale of fossil fuels. That is what the government is doing. That is its direction. That is the intensity of its efforts in the international field. How does that fit with dealing with the crisis that is coming with the change in climate? How is the government being responsible? It is not.

The government needs to understand that climate change is not a situation that we can gradually improve in the future: climate change is here today. The government should deal with it and get on it.