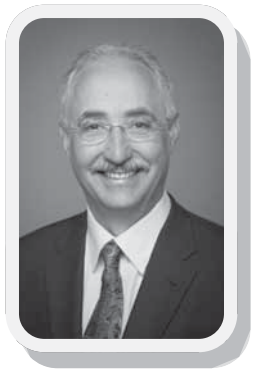


Dennis Bevington

Member of Parliament-Western Arctic

Community Newsletter Winter 2014



Dear Friends,

The past few months have certainly been a time of change for us in the NWT. While, some of these changes have been welcomed, some have been difficult to accept. We had the spectacle of the NWT Devolution Bill, C-15, in front of Parliament.

Half of C-15 implemented the Devolution agreement, the other half made changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act eliminating the regional land and water boards and creating the so-called Super Board. While Northerners have strongly supported the first half of this bill, the same can't be said for the second half. NWT Dene and Metis argue that the changes to the MVRMA go against the spirit and intent on the land claim agreements. Many other Northerners are concerned these changes will lessen environmental protection.

For these reasons I tried to have the bill split into two parts. This would have allowed Devolution to quickly proceed while allowing more time to deal with the changes to the MVRMA. This proposal was voted down by the Conservatives.

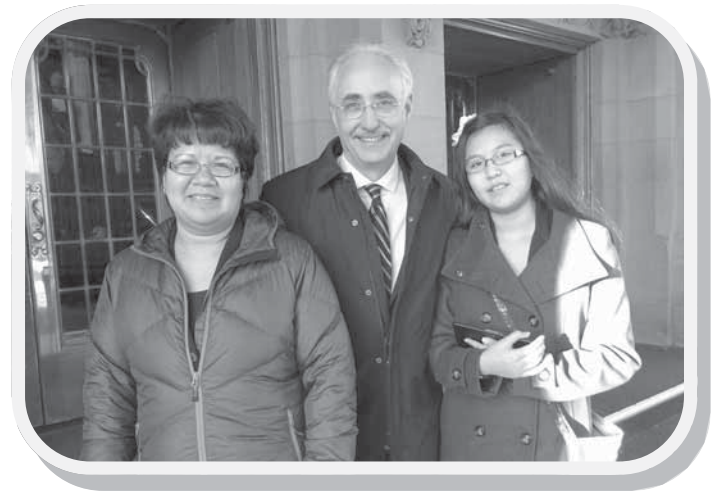
You can read more about the NDP efforts to fix C-15 in this newsletter, including the amendments proposed by Thomas Mulcair. These were defeated by the Conservative majority in the House of Commons. Bill C 15 can be fixed after the next election, by voting the Conservatives out of power.

The next election will be run according to the terms of Bill C-23, called by the Conservatives "the Fair Elections Act". We in the opposition call it the "Unfair Elections Act"! Check the information provided in this newsletter why we see this bill as something that will not deal with the real fraudsters in Canadian elections, those that brought us the Robo-Calls in the last election. We need to encourage people to vote rather than making it harder to vote as this bill does.

On my website, www.dennisbevington.ca, there is a link to a study I released called, "Tackling Living Costs in the NWT". Working with northern researchers, the report uses income tax statistics, and shows that income inequity has increased substantially over the past twelve years. During this same time the NWT economy was rapidly expanding. In some small, Northern communities the rate of people living in poverty has increased. At the same time we demonstrate that the cost of living is inflating much faster than southern Canada. This is double trouble for our communities. The report also discusses possible actions that can be instituted by both the NWT and federal governments. These are outlined later in this newsletter.

Take the time this summer to think how we can make our Northern life more sustainable. Please share your ideas with us through email, letters, or face to face, or with the response feature on this form. I will be taking your ideas and what Northerners are already doing to build a secure, prosperous and exciting future for the North onto the national stage as we develop ways to make Northern life more sustainable.

Meanwhile, enjoy the great sunshine and late winter weather in the North.



Wanda McDonald, Dennis and Julienne Chipesia in front of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa. Julienne was one of the recipients of the 2013 Young Citizens Award for her video titled 'Gwich'in Land Claim Agreement'.

Leader of the Opposition Thomas Mulcair speech on Bill C-15 in the House of Commons on February 11, 2014

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating my friend and colleague the member for Western Arctic for the extraordinary work he has done and the leadership he has shown in this file.

The amendments proposed would delete clauses 136 and 137 of Bill C-15, and it is important to get on the record to explain why. This is quasi-constitutional work that we are doing here today. As the House knows, the travaux préparatoires and the debates follow this type of amendment if it ever has to be interpreted by the courts in the future.

The people of the Northwest Territories have worked toward gaining more province-like powers for decades. The NDP is in favour of devolution and supports the NWT in taking over federal responsibilities in the north. At the same time, Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod and his team of negotiators should be congratulated for achieving this significant evolution in the governance of the Northwest Territories.

Bill C-15 would provide the people of the NWT with something that we who live in the provinces take for granted: control over what happens on our land and the ability to profit from the development of our natural resources.

In less than 50 years, governance in the Northwest Territories has evolved from a colonial administration run by a committee of bureaucrats here in Ottawa to a fully elected and accountable government. I have had a chance to meet the members and the premier, to visit them in their House. The evolution they have gone through is quite extraordinary.

Therefore, Bill C-15 is a major step in that evolution, which the NDP fully supports.

For those of us who live in the provinces, it is only natural that we control our own resources. However, that was not the case for the Northwest Territories.

The preparatory work is often consulted by the courts when there is a constitutional matter at issue, or in this case quasi-constitutional, since this will affect the very foundation of how a territorial government is organized. Unfortunately, the Conservative insistence that changes to the regulatory process be included in Bill C-15 is contrary to a respectful nation to nation process when dealing with first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. This, for the NDP, is crucial. An NDP government would make sure that no decision taken at our cabinet table would fail to respect first nations treaty rights, inherent rights, and Canada's international obligations.

The changes to the system of land and water boards, created through first nation land claim agreements, are disrespectful to the Dene and Métis of the Northwest Territories. The Conservatives heard over and over from the NWT's aboriginal governments and many concerned residents that they did not support these changes, but the Conservatives, unfortunately, were deaf to these concerns.

However, as a number of first nations have raised concerns about the amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, we proposed amendments based on these concerns during the committee review, to make sure that Bill C-15 meets northerners' expectations. Our member for Western Arctic tried splitting the bill at committee so that we would not impede devolution but allow for a full debate on the more controversial changes to the MVRMA. Once again, we are trying to find

workable solutions, but the Conservatives are up to their old tricks.

At report stage, we are moving that clauses 136 and 137, creating a single regulatory board for lands and waters and eliminating the regional land and water boards, be deleted. These sections would eliminate the current system of regional land and water regulatory boards and change the structure of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board to an 11 member board with a chair appointed by the federal minister. This system was created as part of the implementation for the Gwich'in and the Sahtu land claim agreements, and the Tlicho lands, resources, and self-government agreement.

However, by unilaterally changing this system, the Conservatives are ignoring the spirit and intent of these modern day treaties. The original system consisted of three regional land and water boards corresponding to the three settled land claim areas, and the Mackenzie Valley board for projects that span more than one region or are located in areas where there is no settled land claim. This system gives the people, particularly aboriginal people, of the Northwest Territories a voice in how their land and waters are developed.

It is for that reason that the official opposition, the New Democrats, believes that these sections should be deleted. Let the good parts go through. Have the proper debate. Develop a respectful nation to nation approach. That is the way for the future.

Conservative Election Bill making it harder to vote while protecting wrong-doing

OTTAWA – On February 4th of this year the Harper Conservatives brought in what they laughingly call the “Fair Elections Act” but should really be called the “Un-fair Elections Act.”

Following the Robo-calls scandal of the 2011 election, the NDP demanded changes to the law governing Canada's elections. In March 2012, an NDP motion demanding more powers for the Chief Electoral Officer and for the government to present changes to the Elections Act within six months was given unanimous support in the House of Commons.

The new Conservative election bill (C-23) will make it tougher for Canadians to vote – but easier for well-connected insiders to play money politics. Vouching and voter ID cards will no longer be accepted, preventing thousands of students, seniors and Aboriginal people from voting.

Moreover, Bill C-23 will prevent Elections Canada, our electoral body, from speaking publicly about democracy, the importance of voting, conducting research or engaging with Canadians in projects such as Democracy Week or Student Vote. At a time when voter turnout is going down, this just does not make any sense.

The bill also weakens the investigative powers of Elections Canada. The Commissioner of Elections Canada will now be under the Director of Public Prosecutions, and therefore no longer part of Elections Canada. This is like removing the RCMP's ability to investigate breaches of the Criminal Code.

Because of the importance to the future of democracy, New Democrats are fighting to have cross-Canada hearings into this bill. As of press time the response from the Harper Conservatives has been, Canadians can come to us because we won't go to them.

If you are looking for help with your 2013 tax return, Revenue Canada has telephone services.

The toll free number to call is 1 800 959 8281.

Their hours are 8:15 am to 9:00 pm Monday to Friday, except holidays, until April 30, 2014.

On Saturday, the hours are 9:00 to 5 pm.

Forms or publications can be mailed to you if you request it.

For more information on filing your 2013 income tax return go to:

www.cra-arc.gc.ca



ARCTIC PARLIAMENTARIANS MEET IN OTTAWA

Members of Parliament and Senators from nine circumpolar countries met in our House of Commons on February 24, 2014, as one of their three regular meetings per year. The parliamentarians elected me as Vice Chair at the meeting in Ottawa. We will be preparing for our large conference scheduled for Whitehorse in September 2014.

Photo credit: Bernard Thibodeau



Dennis and Angelina Fabien. Angelina received the Prime Ministers Award for Teaching Excellence, she teaches the Chipewyan language at the Deninoo School in Fort Resolution.



Elder Jane Dragon displays all of her animal pelts at the 'Gone Wild' fur fashion show held in Fort Smith in February.

No postage required

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