

Dennis Bevington

Member of Parliament—Northwest Territories



Community Newsletter Spring 2015

Dear Friends:

As we enter into the last three months of the 41st Parliament, I feel confident that Canadians have had enough of the current Harper majority government. On so many issues, this government is failing Canadians.

Stephan Harper's sole goal for our economy of making Canada an "Energy Superpower" has proved to be wrong-headed and short-sighted. The fall of oil prices and the continuing natural gas oversupply in North America, has left our economy and future prospects in very rough shape. Two years ago, the Harper government bragged about 650 natural resource projects across Canada that would light up our economy. They dumped environmental protection laws to make the way easier for those who were waiting to exploit the resources. They ignored constitutionally protected rights of First Nations. They cut the corporate income tax rates so that these dream projects could be even more attractive. The door was wide open for all that wanted a piece of our natural resources.

How has that worked out?

Well, it hasn't.

First Nations across the country are taking the Government to court and winning. The latest example of this is the TliCho Government, which recently got an injunction from the NWT Supreme Court to stop the creation of a Superboard that would replace the regional Land and Water Boards put in place from land claims agreements.

The Harper government talks about its record in job creation since the recession of 2008 as if an unemployment rate of 7 per cent (double that if you include those that have given up looking for work) is something to be happy with. The future of our economy, young people, is doing much worse than that.

This is an election year; it is not the time to be distracted by anti-terrorist security issues, or by our military efforts in the Middle East. It is time to see what leadership can make a difference to your own life, to that of your family and to your community.

In the North we need to focus on what we can do to reduce our crippling cost-of-living, our infrastructure needs, and building local economies in our small communities. We are fortunate in the NWT that our resource sector is in good shape for the next while, but it will not last forever. Economic diversification is essential for the continued viability of the NWT.

To that end, this year, in conjunction with MLA Bob Bromley, I have conducted a stakeholder survey on ideas to expand and deepen our "local economies". The results of this study are available on my website www.dennisbevington.ca in report form. We are also planning a forum called "Localizing our Economy" for May 21-23 in Yellowknife.

Have a great spring and summer,

Dennis



Above: MP Dennis Bevington, Susan Chatwick, and Jessie MacKenzie.



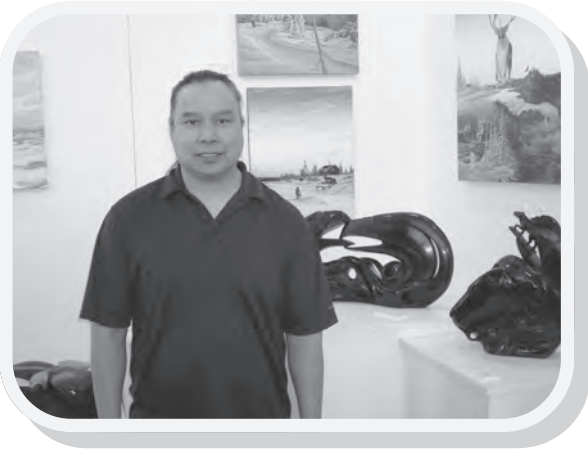
Left: Northern youth demonstrated Arctic sports during the NWT Days held in Ottawa on January 31 to February 1, 2015.

NWT Days was held in Ottawa during Winterlude on January 31 to Feb 1, 2015. Many artists and performers from the north took part in the event.



Above: Karen Wright-Fraser displays her handiwork.

Below: John Sabourin from Fort Simpson.



Above: Brothers William and Peter Greenland.

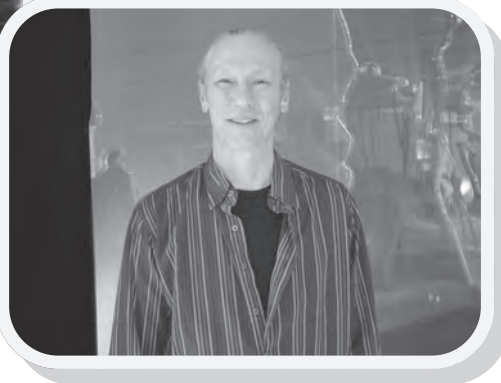


Above: Jennifer Walden from Yellowknife.



Above: Amos Scott from Yellowknife.

Below: Musician Pat Braden.



Above: Derrald Taylor.

Below: Antoine Mountain and Angus Beaulieu.



Above: Musician Leela Gilday from Yellowknife.



Above: Norman Peltier, Pablo Saravnja, Dennis and Lorne McGinnis.



Left: Cathie Bolstad and Michelle Handley.



In Committee:

My Statement to the Aboriginal Affairs Minister March 24th 2015

On March 24th the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development testified before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. He was speaking to Bill S-6 which changes the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act which was created through the Yukon land claims final agreement.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP):

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thank you Mr. Minister for meeting here today and hearing our point of view and our questions on this particular bill.

I think one of the things that you've said here gives me a lot of trouble. You've said that these territories are the same and we want to have the same legislation for them. You want to have a cookie cutter approach to northern development. It's really not appropriate. I think you should revise your thinking on that.

These territories are very different. If you went to New Brunswick and said I want to see the same environmental legislation in New Brunswick as in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, I think you'd have a fight on your hands.

That's what you've created here.

You've thought that somehow that the work that you did in the Northwest Territories, much of which was opposed by the people there, is now a good reason why you're going to come down on the Yukon and actually take a system that is working and denigrate it by these four amendments, denigrate the system that has been in place, that people agreed to, that people are working under, and now you're going to put in amendments that were not well accepted in the Northwest Territories, the unilateral binding policy direction that you imposed on the Northwest Territories.

The Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act was not universally accepted there by any means. So when you talk about doing this in the Yukon now to match up to the Northwest Territories I think you're really just...that is just a specious argument and you should refrain from it. You should recognise the character of these three territories.

Secondly, the process you talked about in consultation, which you said to us today, negates any consultation. When you say that you went to the First Nations with a bill and that you couldn't give them the bill because it was in a form that was already under federal rules that weren't allowed for distribution, you've negated the concept of consultation right there. You've already made up your mind. You created a bill. How can you go back and

consult with people when you've created a piece of legislation that you're going to put forward? That's another real problem I see with what you've said here today.

Then you bring out this definition of government that's in your agreement that you have there and you say because we define government this way then we can say that the First Nations are not governments in the Yukon. No, there is a higher authority here, it's called the constitution and you have to recognise that as well. We have given First Nations rights under the constitution and they must be respected.

On these three points I think you've negated much of what you came here to try to accomplish in front of us and I think you should go back and take another look at this legislation. It's not supported by the Yukon people because they're happy with what they have. It's working. They're making their way through a very unique arrangement between First Nations and public government that is very important to them.

Even the industry recognizes that. I refer to you a letter from Casino Mining. I refer to you to a letter to you from the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon. These are people that are saying look, stop trying to turn back the clock, stop trying to reassert your paternalistic attitude towards the Yukon, and recognise that we've grown past that.

That's what they're saying to you. Why are you doing what you're doing? What's the purpose of this? Just to create more trouble? To bring us back to the court like you've done in the Northwest Territories now with the super board?

We've got an injunction. Hopefully that injunction will last past the next election and the new government can throw your legislation out. They can throw out your idea of a super board and bring back what works in the Northwest Territories.

Those are issues that we see, I see. You've said a lot here today and I am just showing you what you've done with what you've said here today.

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NDP MPs bring home the dollars in federal funding

Quite often it is said that Northerners are better off when their MP is from the governing party, however a recent story in the *Hill Times* newspaper has revealed that is simply not the case.

The piece by David Akin in the March 16th edition of the paper examined spending announcements for all 308 federal ridings. Akin found that of the ten ridings with most federal project spending five are held by Conservative MPs, four are held NDP MPs with the remaining riding held by a Liberal. Akin's calculations start on May 2, 2011, the date of the last election.

The Northwest Territories sits right in the middle of the top ten at fifth place with over \$124.47 million in federal funding. The riding receiving the most federal spending is held by NDP Deputy-Leader Megan Leslie receiving nearly \$300 million. In fourth place is Manitoba NDP MP Pat Martin with more than \$126 million in federal funding. At tenth place on the list is Northern Ontario NDP MP Charlie Angus at over \$52 million. Nunavut, held by cabinet minister Leona Aglukkaq, was not in the top 20 ridings.

NDP MPs fight hard for their constituents, ensuring they get a fair share of federal funding.

Conservatives fiddle while Northerners go hungry

By now many of you have seen the picture of Nunavut Conservative MP Leona Aglukkaq reading the newspaper in the House of Commons while I and other NDP MPs raised questions about Nutrition North. The lack of concern shown by the Conservative's Cabinet Minister from the North is just a small part of the Harper government's failure with Nutrition North.

A recent Statistics Canada report found the number of households that couldn't afford healthy food in the North increased during the first year of the Nutrition North. Stats Can reported that Nunavut has the highest rate of food insecurity in Canada, at 36.7 per cent, the Northwest Territories is second at 13.7 per cent, and Yukon is third, at 12.4 per cent. The Canadian average for food insecurity is about 10.2 per cent of households with children and 7.6 per cent of those without children.

Food insecurity is when people can't afford enough food, or the right variety of foods needed for a healthy diet.

Following a request by NDP MPs, the Auditor General examined Nutrition North. His report, which came out in the fall of 2014, found a program in deep trouble. The Auditor General found there are more than 50 isolated and remote communities that either gets the minimum subsidy or no subsidy at all. He also found that the government couldn't tell if the program was effective in reducing food insecurity, that there was no way of knowing if the subsidy was being passed on and that no proper eligibility criteria had been set-up to determine if a community should qualify for the subsidy. On the last point the Auditor General revealed the Department of Aboriginal Affairs had based its community eligibility on the use of the old Food Mail program.

New Democrat MPs continue to fight for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples of the more than 130 communities in the northern parts of the provinces and the three territories. We continue to pressure the Conservative government to immediately include in the Nutrition North program the 50 fly-in, isolated Northern communities that are not currently eligible for the full subsidy.

We are also pressuring the Conservatives to create equitable program eligibility criteria for Northern communities based on their real circumstances and to provide sufficient funding to meet the needs of all Northern communities.

As a government, New Democrats would immediately initiate a review of the Nutrition North program to determine ways of directly providing the subsidy to Northern residents. This review would be conducted with Northerners as full partners. Further, an NDP government would work with Northerners to develop effective and efficient solutions to Northern Food Insecurity.

Later this spring NDP MPs will be taking further action on getting the Harper government to fix Nutrition North.

Have your say, send us your thoughts.
