

*Supply*

• (2010)

I invite the members of this House to come and visit northwestern Ontario. Members will truly be impressed with the beauty of our natural surroundings, our forests, lakes and our famous sunsets. I am sure they will enjoy their visit. I am also sure that discerning individuals with attention to economic development will witness certain inadequacies in infrastructure.

They will see that our highways still need improvements. Some members will be dissatisfied that they cannot travel to certain areas simply because there are no roads at all. Some members will see and be surprised that growing municipalities do not have adequate sewer and water treatment facilities. One or two visits to First Nations communities will likely leave members disenchanted with current conditions.

The federal infrastructure works program speaks to these conditions. But I emphasize that northwestern Ontario and other regions in Canada need improved infrastructure. The north, remote areas of my riding such as First Nations communities, require basic infrastructure such as roads to open up economic opportunities. A road network where there is currently nothing will create the opportunities for trade within the region as a starting block.

Further road links such as the highway I have talked about in this House on many occasions from Red Lake in my riding to Winnipeg, which I have been requesting for some time and more reasonable air transportation connections, will then lead to enhanced trade outside of the region.

This trade will not only be in goods and commodities but also people themselves. Although tourism is a strong component of economic development in my riding there remains many untapped opportunities mainly because of poor transportation infrastructure.

Finally, I return to where I started, the resource sector. First I would like to comment on the mining industry which as most people are aware is a struggling industry in Canada. It is encouraging that the federal budget makes contributions to trust funds for mine reclamation tax deductible. This deduction will help mining companies utilize cash flow for other operating costs as well as making it convenient to ensure mine sites are rehabilitated after operations cease.

Certainly market trends have not been favourable recently for the mining sector in Canada. That is why it is all the more important for this government to seriously consider tax incentives or other measures to help stimulate mining activity. We need to encourage grassroots exploration and investment in Canadian based mineral companies.

I understand the Minister of Finance is open to the concept of mining incentives and I look forward to contributing to the process of renewing this policy.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that environmental guidelines for the mining industry are necessary and it is our responsibility to protect the environment. However, the procedures in place are convoluted and confusing, resulting in unnecessary delays to legitimate mine start-ups. As a result we are losing mineral investment dollars to foreign nations.

We must stop this leakage and support mining projects in Canada by established, concise and efficient environmental assessment procedures. We can protect the environment and ensure mining operations are safe without frightening away investment due to red tape and uncertainty from within the bureaucracy.

I can say from talking to the Minister of the Environment and the understanding that I have within the government that we are now in the process of dealing with that very difficult and complex issue of duplication of environmental policy across the country. I hope to be able to stand up here very soon and share in the announcement of this government that we now have one process for mines, one process for forestry, one process for Canadians as it relates to the environmental assessment process and not have to spin our wheels going from one department to the next, municipal, provincial, federal and God only knows wherever else we have to go before we can get economic development within our regions.

Second, I would like to directly address the forest industry in Canada which is by far the primary economic activity in my riding. The federal government as we all know does not have direct jurisdiction over forestry practices. The federal government instead contributes to research and scientific development through federal-provincial forestry development agreements.

• (2015)

I feel it is the federal government's responsibility and should remain an eminent priority to lend as much support as possible to the development of sustainable forestry practices. A viable and environmentally responsible forestry sector will provide a launching board for the growth of diversified businesses in northwestern Ontario and other forestry regions.

In the estimates there are many things involved, as I have talked about, relating to forestry and mining. It is so obvious to those of us who have been around this House for awhile, the opposition, where I was before this Parliament, that it is very easy to stand up and pick one or two issues to criticize the government on. I hope the members opposite get the opportunity to be on the government side, as some of them have. It would be of benefit to not hold their breath, but if in fact it were their wish to get the opportunity to create policy they would look at initiatives like this in a very favourable light as I have.