

Northern Canada Power Commission

As I said at the outset, the sale of NCPC is consistent with the federal Government's northern framework, which includes the goal of transferring programs and responsibilities of a provincial nature to the territorial Governments. Northerners are eager that this occur—I can personally vouch for this—and the territorial Governments are ready and able to take on the job. Proof of this is to be found in the successful transfer I mentioned earlier. Bill C-125 is an important step in the transfer process.

The territorial Government is off to a good start. It had its legislation in place before the March 31 deadline while we are a couple of weeks late. It is establishing the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, a territorial Crown corporation, and has already named the new board. It is a very good new board, and I recognize a number of the names, particularly that of the Chairman, Mr. Jim Robertson of Inuvik. I am sure they will do a good job.

One of the first jobs they will be called upon to perform is the selection of a new president, or chief operating officer. That will be a very important decision, and while we are on the subject, we should render our compliments to Mr. Jack Beaver, who, despite rather ill health, agreed to stay on. While he thought it would only be for a matter of months, it turned out to be somewhat longer. He agreed to stay on to make sure that the transition went smoothly. Mr. Beaver has done an excellent job over many years and we in the North thank him for that.

There will be a number of other decisions to be made, one of which will be the location of the head office. Presently it is in Edmonton and will have to be moved north. As we all know, there is considerable debate as to where it should go, and, in a way, I am fortunate that it will now be a territorial decision rather than one in the hands of federal representatives.

When the head office is transferred, we will have to take special notice of the Edmonton employees, many of whom will not want to move north. Generally speaking, I think we have done a very good job with the employees of NCPC, although some of them are still not quite sure where they stand. That will have to be made known to them. In particular, the new owners will have to devote some attention to the Edmonton employees.

The new corporation will be faced with some rather serious problems, including upgrading the facilities. Some of the facilities are in need of renewal. I understand it has already started on a new power line and is already doing the clearing for a new power line from the Snare Hydro site to the City of Yellowknife. The corporation is faced with the loss of its biggest customer, Pine Point Mines. That will cause some problems which it will have to overcome.

The territories will also have to take over what we might call a social responsibility. As this sale takes place, the federal Government will no longer be providing subsidies to very remote areas. That will become the responsibility of territorial authorities. Of course, there will be an ongoing debate as to

whether a territorial Crown corporation, *per se*, is the best way to provide electrical energy to consumers in the region. Perhaps we could look at the Yukon model, which is a kind of a joint system between private investors and a territorial Crown corporation. We could look at other ways for investor involvement perhaps to occur. There are a number of other models and maybe some completely new ideas that ought to be looked at. As well, the territories will have to reassess the functions and authorities of the public utilities board.

• (1540)

All in all, I think that this is an excellent move on the part of the Government. A lot of hard work has gone into this on the part of people who have been involved in the negotiations including those with NCPC, those with the federal Government and those with territorial Governments. It has been a long, hard road to slog, but we have now reached the goal. It deserves the support of all Hon. Members so that northerners might soon realize the same economic control over their destiny enjoyed by their counterparts south of sixty.

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Madam Speaker, I am certainly very pleased to participate in this debate because we are doing something today that is positive and helpful for the development of Canada's great North. Bill C-125 authorizes the Northern Canada Power Commission, a federal Crown corporation, to be sold to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

As has already been indicated by my friend from Western Arctic, this Bill is really a piece of companion legislation to one with which we dealt last year, Bill C-45, which permitted the Yukon assets and operation of the Northern Canada Power Commission to be transferred to the full ownership and control of Yukoners. Bill C-125 which is now being considered and Bill C-45 which has already been passed are, in general, though not in every specific point, in keeping with the recommendations of a report prepared for Parliament by a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. That report is entitled *Electrical Power North of Sixty Degrees*. It was certainly a great pleasure for me to work on that subcommittee along with my good and able friend from Western Arctic.

In examining the organizational arrangements of the Northern Canada Power Commission, the subcommittee to which I have referred found that the territorial Governments had almost no legislative and regulatory jurisdiction over the Northern Canada Power Commission as a federal Crown corporation. This was a bone of contention. It was a grievance that existed in the North.

Second, in examining the organizational arrangements, the subcommittee found that the federal Government's powers, decision-making and budgetary processes do not make the Northern Canada Power Commission fully accountable to the people it serves. When accountability is remote, as it was