

Borrowing Authority

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

An Hon. Member: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Churchill. Debate.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, the Opposition is having a good day so far, and I understand that later today the Government is going to support the Private Members' Motion standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Okanagan-Similkameen-Merritt (Mr. Whittaker).

An Hon. Member: Don't push your luck.

Mr. Murphy: I thought perhaps with the mood that is in the House and the fact that the Opposition usually gets its way on everything that perhaps we could defeat the borrowing authority at the same time.

An Hon. Member: Perhaps you would want to demonstrate generosity for a change from your side.

Mr. Murphy: Yes, and unfortunately I have only 10 minutes to speak on this very important matter. Besides that, unfortunately if we force the vote we do not get to have the vote until Tuesday by which time I suspect the Government will go back to its usual attitude on these matters.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, having the opportunity to get up and speak on the borrowing authority does give me the opportunity to be concerned with the general direction of this Government and the program that it has put forward in its Budget, because of course the whole nature of the borrowing authority is to provide the money that it needs to fund Government programs.

I come from the Province of Manitoba, as you well know, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we had a delegation in town from Portage la Prairie, who are very concerned with the fact that their base is being closed. It is a base which is used to train pilots. It is an initial stage base that gives the initial training and also gives training for helicopter pilots. I understand from the representatives of the community of Portage la Prairie that when they met with the Minister and met with the Conservative caucus that the response they had was: "Well, we can privatize the training of military pilots." I thought that this is probably the most ironic situation in the world.

The Government of Canada says that it is committed to defence, committed to NATO and committed to enlarging our role, but for some reason it believes that the training of military pilots can be done by the private sector. The Government somehow believes that it can close the community of Portage la Prairie because that is what it is going to be doing by its Budget. The Government has no concept of how it affects that community. It has no concept of what it does to the school division, what it does to the community of Portage la Prairie, and what it does to the rural municipality of Portage la Prairie where a number of those people live and work. It has absolutely no concept of what it has done in its Budget to that area.

Although I am not someone who has promoted NATO in the past and I am certainly not going to promote it today, we have always recognized in the New Democratic Party the proper role for defence. One of the things that we have emphasized is a Canadian role and that we have an obligation within Canada. What we see from the Government is that it has exactly the opposite approach. It is closing bases right across this country. It has no concern for the communities that are affected. We know that it is not made in the best interest of Canadians as a whole. That is one of the concerns that I have as a Manitoban getting up and speaking on the borrowing authority.

Another concern which is very close to me, and I have raised the issue for three days in a row now in the House of Commons, is the Port of Churchill. I indicated today in Petitions that we have support from all communities in northern Manitoba on the Port of Churchill. Yesterday in my petition in the House of Commons, I indicated we had support from right across the country on the Port of Churchill and that we had petitions signed right from St. John's to Victoria supporting the use of the Port of Churchill.

We were told on Monday by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard), that there was no guarantee that there would be any grain whatsoever coming through the Port of Churchill this year.

It is ironic that the provincial Minister of Transportation in Manitoba knew this a week ago. He was told by the federal Minister of Transport that this was the case, and he did not make that information public. He did not tell the people of Churchill. He did not tell the people of The Pas who work on the rail lines. He did not tell any of