

*Northern Canada Power Commission Yukon Assets Disposal  
Authorization Act*

of any possible industrial slow-down. All in all, the financial agreements agreed to are deemed to be fair and equitable, a fair price has been paid, and with the substantial debt write-off by the federal Government, Yukon should be able to have an operating, viable utility in both the short and long term.

Power rates under the agreement will be frozen at the present level for at least two years. This decision has been well received, to say the least, by Yukoners. This will also provide for a stable environment for the new ownership during transition. Care has been taken to ensure fair treatment for employees, and I am pleased to announce that as a result of the agreement all Yukon NCPC employees will be offered jobs with comparable salaries and benefits. We believe that is very important.

The Bill provides for the Minister to authorize NCPC to sell its Yukon assets to the Yukon Development Corporation, an agency of the Government of Yukon. It writes off the debt and authorizes the Minister to transfer to the Government of Yukon our contribution towards equity. It contains a number of related provisions such as the protection of pension rights for NCPC employees, and the transfer of water and land use rights for operating the utility. Yukon is now ready, willing and certainly able to take the responsibility for NCPC and provide to the consumers in Yukon its own utility at a reasonable rate. It is very important for the people of Yukon and to Members of this House. I feel confident in saying that with the support of all members and all Parties in the House, this transfer will go forward, to the benefit not just of Yukoners but of all Canadians.

I thank the House for its attention.

**Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior):** Mr. Speaker, in speaking to this Bill I would like to begin by relating a brief incident which took place in the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development yesterday. We were considering presenting a report to Parliament regarding the amendment to the Constitution on aboriginal rights, specifically referring to the right of Indian self-government. Unfortunately, government Members decided there would be no report and used their majority to stop such a report from being tabled in the House of Commons today. I am not raising that as an issue at this moment. I simply want to point out that during the vigorous debate which took place in the committee one member said that the reports of parliamentary committees were no more than tokens. He asked why we should involve ourselves in tokenism.

My reason for mentioning this is that what we are doing today in this House is proof positive that timely committee reports can be effective.

It was on March 12, 1981, that the then Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development established a subcommittee, the terms of reference for which were to study all aspects of the operations of The Northern Canada Power Commission. That subcommittee reported to Parliament on April 7, 1982. Quite a number of members played a very key

and important role in that committee, and in passing I would like to make reference to them. One was the then Hon. Member for Abitibi, Mr. René Gingras. There was the then Hon. Member for Nunatsiak, Mr. Peter Ittinuar. There was the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson), who introduced the forest transfer Bill today. The then Hon. Member for Edmonton East, Mr. Bill Yurko, was there, and also the Hon. Member for Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands (Mr. Manly), who is also a Member of this Parliament. I might just say it was my privilege to be the Chairman of that subcommittee, but without the help of the Hon. Member for Western Arctic, who has an engineering background, and that of the then Hon. Member for Edmonton East, himself a chemical engineer, I do not think we could have successfully undertaken such a difficult task. It really required a huge amount of technical information to be absorbed and then appropriate recommendations had to be made. It was one of the more difficult assignments I have had as a Member of Parliament. Therefore, I would like to spend a little time on the recommendations of that report, and I will not be unduly long.

The subcommittee recommended that complete federal devolution to the territorial Crown corporations be accepted quickly, along with the forgiveness of federal debt and the commencement of a process of discussion by the territorial Government involving private utilities as well as the Northern Canada Power Commission. The recommendation reflected the findings of the subcommittee that the federal Government's decision-making and budgetary powers did not make the NCPC fully accountable to the people it serves. The territorial Governments have almost no legislative and regulatory jurisdiction over the NCPC. In our hearings in the North we detected a strong level of hostility against this arrangement.

The subcommittee's report also recommended that all electrical power utilities operating in the Yukon should be fully subject to regulation by the Yukon Utilities Board. Most Canadians would find it surprising if that were not the case, but in fact there was only an understanding that NCPC would appear before the Utilities Board. They had no genuine or real power over them. Devolution of the NCPC responsibility to territorial utilities would remove the existing obstacle to effective regulation, namely the fact that NCPC was not subject to the Yukon Utilities Board. The subcommittee also concluded that the power rates paid by Northerners were excessive. It specifically recommended that the existing debt of the NCPC to the Government of Canada should be written off in its entirety and that the flexible financing arrangements which we thought were possible should be established for loans to finance any hydro facilities.

Now, Sir, the agreement made between Canada and Yukon to transfer the NCPC, which is being done through this legislation, will mark the fulfilment of not all but many of that report's recommendations, certainly with respect to devolution of the NCPC, ownership and regulation. The specific financial