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ENVIRONMENT

Polar Environment Atmospheric
Research Laboratory

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, March 28, 2012

THE SENATE

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[Translation]

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POLAR ENVIRONMENT ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH LABORATORY

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the Polar Environment Atmospheric Research Laboratory, also known as PEARL, is a world-renowned Canadian atmospheric research station located in the northernmost part of the world. Researchers there monitor the ozone layer, greenhouse gases and pollution in the High Arctic. In particular, last year, the research station played a key role in discovering the very first hole in the ozone layer over the Arctic.

But, now that the government has cut the station's funding, including funding for the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences, the station will be forced to close its doors in April. Could the leader please tell us why the government is refusing to support climate research by depriving this important laboratory of the funding it needs to remain open?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, Environment Canada has provided partial funding, along with other bodies, since 2009 for the Polar Environment Atmospheric Research Laboratory. I believe I have already answered this question in this place. Regardless, university researchers have not been successful to date in their application for funding to do the research at PEARL. Environment Canada's ozone and weather monitoring station at Eureka, Nunavut, does continue to operate and function. It is not affected by the inability of the applications for research funding.

• (1410)

Senator Tardif: Honourable senators, is the leader telling me, then, that the station will not be closing at the end of April? That is not what the scientists working there are saying. Would she confirm whether the station will be staying open, yes or no?

Senator LeBreton: All I can tell the honourable senator is what I have been advised. Environment Canada's ozone and weather monitoring station at Eureka continues to operate and is not impacted by the outcome of the university researchers' being unsuccessful to have funding for their applications with PEARL.

Senator Tardif: I do not understand, Senator LeBreton. There are no funds. They cannot operate the station if there are no funds. If they have been unsuccessful, there are obviously no funds.

Will the government make funds available to keep this important research station going?

Senator LeBreton: Environment Canada does have an ozone and weather monitoring station in Nunavut. I have just repeated that the operations of Environment Canada at this station have not been affected by the PEARL decision.

Senator Tardif: I do not think that is the same thing, Senator LeBreton. The station being operated is 1,200 kilometres south. It is the most northerly station that will be cut.

This station provides a very important service. We are talking continually about Arctic sovereignty. It seems to me that if we are talking about Arctic sovereignty, and this is something that the leader's government is always speaking about, then having an occupied station all year long doing world-class science, being the place where international groups want to come and do research, that would be affirming Canadian sovereignty.

Why is the leader's government allowing this Arctic research station to close?

Senator LeBreton: The fact of the matter is that Environment Canada is still operating there. I will seek, honourable senators, to get further information.

As far as I know, Environment Canada is still conducting research, operating stations in the North. With regard to the university funding, obviously they were not successful. Environment Canada still puts significant funding into projects, but I will seek further clarification.