



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### Arctic Research

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Thursday, May 17, 2012

## THE SENATE

Thursday, May 17, 2012

### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

#### ARCTIC RESEARCH

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, the Arctic Institute of North America's Kluane Lake Research Station, which just celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, will likely be forced to close its doors soon due to federal budget cuts. This station, operated mainly by scientists from universities in Alberta and British Columbia, is one of many whose operations are being threatened in the Arctic.

In response to federal budget cuts, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council has ended a funding program that helped this facility and other research facilities across Canada. The Kluane Lake Research Station was renovated just last year after receiving a \$2.5 million investment from the federal government's Arctic Research Infrastructure Fund, but now scientists working there cannot afford to keep it operational.

Why would the government invest in infrastructure in the Arctic without a plan for keeping these important facilities operational?

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I believe that the honourable senator has asked me that question before. The funding for that organization was not solely provided by the government. When the senator asked this question before, I undertook to get a written response. Perhaps I did not do that, but I will take this question as notice.

The organization of which the honourable senator speaks could not access funding from other sources, and that is why they could not continue.

**Senator Tardif:** Honourable senators, that was not the same facility; it was the Polar Environmental Atmospheric Research Laboratory, PEARL. I can understand that it could be confusing as so many facilities are being shut down.

The government has repeatedly said that it is committed to having an important presence in the North. However, due to federal budget cuts and the cost of operating there, many scientists who are now hard-pressed for funding are shifting their research away from the Arctic and are preparing their exit.

David Hik, a University of Alberta scientist and a member of the board of this Arctic Institute said budget cuts:

... will have repercussions on the operations of most Arctic infrastructures operated or funded by universities, or other NSERC eligible institutions.

... there is a clear misalignment between major investments in infrastructure such as new buildings, ships, research stations through the Economic Action Plan and other programs, and large cuts or absence of any sustainable operational funding.

Honourable senators, these stations provide important services, from research on climate change to affirming Canada's sovereignty in the North. Why is the government allowing them to shut down?

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, it is clear that the government has embarked on a whole host of programs targeted to the North through the infrastructure program and many other initiatives. I thank the honourable senator for clarifying that it was the PEARL project that she had asked about earlier.

The government has undertaken many initiatives in the North. I will take the honourable senator's question as notice. There is a lot of misinformation flying about with regard to what we are doing in the North, the resources we have put into the North, the role of the scientists and to whom they are responsible. Sometimes we partner with the private sector.

If the honourable senator does not mind, I will take her question as notice and provide her with a detailed response.