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TSAWWASSEN FIRST NATION FINAL AGREEMENT BILL

Second Reading of Bill C-34

Speech by:

The Honourable Larry W. Campbell

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

THE SENATE

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SECOND READING

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Bill C-34, An Act to give effect to the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Before I speak on that, I commend the leadership on both sides of this house for allowing this bill to come forward and to proceed to Royal Assent. I spoke to Chief Baird yesterday. She is incredibly pleased with what is happening here.

Being Canada's first urban land claim treaty, it is a tremendously important and historical step in the right direction. It is my hope and the hope of the Government of British Columbia that this treaty will act as a model for all the urban First Nations, not only in the Lower Mainland, but across Canada on how to achieve a just treaty.

When the treaty comes into effect, the Tsawwassen First Nation will own their own land. They will have their own independent government, the right to self-determination and resources and funding to begin building a better future for their people.

The final agreement provides a structure that maintains federal and provincial laws, while entrenching the rights of Aboriginals to be the chief determinants of their future.

In addition, this agreement insists on government that is accountable through the creation of a Constitution. This Constitution will require the principles of democratic governance and financial accountability to be central to the

Tsawwassen First Nation. These provisions guarantee that the community is served in a responsible and democratic manner.

I am personally honoured to have the opportunity to speak to this bill and strongly believe that through the implementation of this legislation we will have a blueprint for other urban First Nations across Canada.

It is difficult for urban First Nations to come to agreements. Much of their former land is occupied and is now part of our houses, infrastructure and communities. Therefore, it is no easy feat to find a way to come to grips with all the different and conflicting ideas and concerns.

Honourable senators, there was non-partisan support for Bill C-34 in the other place.

In the words of the Conservatives:

It is a bill to be celebrated.

In the words of the Bloc Québécois:

The agreement is a fine example of self-government.

In the words of the NDP:

It will provide economic certainty, it will promote autonomy and provide compensation.

On behalf of the Liberals, I agree on all fronts and look forward to seeing this bill pass. Again, my heartfelt thanks to both sides for the leadership they have shown in this matter.