

Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories made a mandate commitment during this Legislative Assembly to continue to develop and advance initiatives to displace diesel generation in the NWT including advancing the Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion project.

With the Department of Infrastructure at the helm, the GNWT has continued to work with the federal and Indigenous governments, provinces, territories, and NWT residents to promote a cleaner, more reliable energy supply in rural and remote communities, reducing pollution in Canada's North, and creating new opportunities for social and economic development.

Mr. Speaker, last month the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, joined the Premier and myself to announce over \$1.2 million in federal and territorial investments in the Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion project. This funding will advance technical aspects of the project, and help support our Indigenous partners to develop a business framework for their participation in the opportunities the future expansion will bring.

This announcement demonstrates the Government of the Northwest Territories' ongoing efforts to work with the Government of Canada to realize our long-term vision and approach to energy and climate change and will enable the Northwest Territories to transition to a strong, healthy economy that is less dependent on fossil fuels. It also supports our goals outlined under the 2030 Energy Strategy, and is part of a full service infrastructure corridor that will provide clean energy to a region rich in materials required for low-carbon technologies, such as cobalt, lithium and nickel.

The proposed initial expansion of the Taltson project will deliver 60 megawatts of clean energy to the North Slave hydroelectric system, more than doubling current hydroelectricity capacity in the territory, while improving energy security and stabilizing the cost of energy for all NWT residents. This project will also contribute to a cleaner environment and stronger economy as it will remove up to 240,000 tonnes of polluting emissions from the air each year, stimulate local economies, and provide employment opportunities for Indigenous and northern residents. Later phases of the expansion will connect the Taltson hydroelectric system with provincial electricity networks, creating a more integrated energy system that will allow for increased north-south energy trade.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, this federal support will help advance the Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion project in two key areas.

First, the funding provided will advance technical aspects of the project such as ensuring all previous engineering and design work is up-to-date, environmental baseline work is completed, an engagement strategy for all affected people is developed, and a business model framework is established.

Second, it will support our partners from the Akaitcho Territory Government, the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, and the Salt River First Nation to establish their business model frameworks to actively participate in the development of the project.

Partnering with Indigenous governments is an integral component of this project. Incorporating Indigenous rights, knowledge, and cultural values into project design and implementation, and that all stakeholders experience its far-reaching benefits. The GNWT will continue to engage directly with communities and Indigenous organizations on this project to ensure their participation, partnership, and empowerment.

Mr. Speaker, this funding announcement is just step one in realizing the full Taltson project. In addition to the announced funding, the GNWT has also put in a request with the Government of Canada for additional financial support to further advance the project over the next three years. We're hopeful that we'll have a response back from that ask in the coming months.

The Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion project is more than a transmission project. It represents a key element in the Government of the Northwest Territories vision for a lower carbon economy that will increase the availability of clean, renewable energy to help us achieve our mandate commitment of displacing diesel generation, as well as lowering the cost of living for residents, and allowing the territory to meet its commitments to address climate change. This project also reflects the important role clean energy infrastructure plays in growing and stimulating the economy.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting time. We are looking forward to working together with all of our partners in this project to realize our vision of clean energy for our communities and our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.