

Energy Update

Mr. Speaker, our government has made commitments in its mandate to investigate and implement renewable and alternative energy solutions, explore the potential for the development of hydroelectric power and transmission lines, and develop wind and solar energies to replace diesel. Transitioning away from expensive fossil fuels for home heating and electricity generation will be critical for reducing the cost of living for residents, and protecting the NWT environment.

Today, I would like to provide Members with an update on some of the energy initiatives being undertaken by our government to fulfill these commitments.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year our government completed comprehensive public engagement on energy and climate change. This public engagement, done in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, allowed us to gather input from residents to help inform the development of a new Energy Strategy.

We heard that the people of the Northwest Territories support the transition to a lower carbon economy. To achieve a lower carbon economy, we must use less fossil fuel. People understood that our dependence on imported fossil fuels contributes to climate change, causes pollution, and leaves us at the mercy of fluctuating world market prices.

People also understood, only too well, the challenges of life in the North, especially the challenge of our high cost of living. While most people want to see more renewables and alternatives they also associate these choices with an increased cost.

Mr. Speaker, we heard that we must set realistic and achievable emissions targets. We heard that future carbon tax revenues should be redistributed to those impacted. We heard that energy efficiency programs and financial incentives should be expanded and be more flexible.

The proposed Energy Strategy, Mr. Speaker, would lead us over the next decade and beyond. Our government, with input from Regular Members and the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, will release a draft of the Strategy this session for public input.

The draft Strategy sets out a long-term approach to addressing the affordability, security and sustainability of energy supply and use in the Northwest Territories. The goal of this Strategy is to guide the development of affordable, secure and sustainable energy for transportation, heat, and electricity, support energy efficiency and conservation, and promote renewable and alternative energy solutions for the NWT.

Once we finalize the 2030 Energy Strategy, this government will develop an action plan to support its implementation.

Mr. Speaker, while we have been hard at work addressing this mandate commitment, progress has been made on a number of innovative projects to improve energy affordability, reliability and sustainability in the Northwest Territories.

For example, this government intends to pursue a megawatt scale wind project in Inuvik, which will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the NWT's largest diesel community. The GNWT will undertake technical and regulatory work, refine cost estimates, and undertake community consultation as we move towards a decision to construct. We are assessing the suitability of further smaller-scale wind projects in Sachs Harbour and Norman Wells. Both communities are due for power plant upgrades as part of NTPC's capital plan and we will collect wind data over two years to make an evidence-based decision about using wind to displace diesel in these communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are also installing a second exhaust heat recovery system in Inuvik's power plant to capture and use residual heat from the natural gas generators. This project will supplement our existing residual heating system to provide building heat, heat the liquefied natural gas we use to generate power, and heat the Town of Inuvik's water supply as opposed to having to use diesel. We are also studying the potential to use this residual heat for district heating of buildings in the community. By capturing wind energy in Inuvik, and diverting residual heat, we are making progress in reducing Inuvik's reliance on diesel and moving towards alternative sources of meeting the town's needs for energy.

Meanwhile, in Tulita, we are installing 45 kilowatts of solar. This is in addition to the 55 kilowatts installed in the community of Aklavik last year. Our total for installed solar power in the NWT is almost 850 kilowatts. Mr. Speaker, this makes the NWT amongst the leaders in Canada in terms of solar capacity installed per person in the territory.

Finding and developing new, innovative options for energy is one aspect of addressing our energy needs. Another aspect is making our government assets more efficient. Through the Capital Asset Retrofit Fund, we have created a work plan which includes \$3.8 million in upgrades including lighting retrofits, large biomass heating systems, and insulation upgrades. Of note is the 950 kilowatt biomass boiler in the Inuvik hospital that is expected to save \$100,000 in heating costs and offset 1,400 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

Mr. Speaker, we rely on energy in our daily lives. Access to secure, affordable, and environmentally sustainable sources of energy is essential to the prosperity of the NWT. Energy drives our economy. Energy is essential for everyday living in the North, and everyone in the NWT has a part to play in achieving a more sustainable NWT.

We look forward to even more success as we move to finalize and start implementing the new 2030 Energy Strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.