

**Water Monitoring**

Mr. Speaker, water is life and our government is committed to ensuring we always have an abundant supply of clean and safe water.

This year has been challenging to say the least. Earlier this spring we learned of large wastewater spills and seepages that had occurred in the Alberta Oil Sands.

To our dismay, these spills had not been communicated to the GNWT or Indigenous governments in the territory. The NWT is downstream from the oil sands, and water flows here so we need to know when these incidents occur.

Mr. Speaker, these events hurt the trust built between the Government of Alberta and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

But more importantly, communities downstream now have less trust that the right steps are being taken to ensure the safety of their communities including the water, fish, and other wildlife they depend on.

Today, I would like to provide an update on the work being done to monitor the Slave River. We will ensure that waters that are downstream from the oilsands are safe and will continue to share what our government does on an ongoing basis to monitor waters across our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that our government acted quickly when we were informed of these incidents.

We worked with the Town of Fort Smith, the Fort Smith Métis Council, and the Smith's Landing First Nation to develop an enhanced monitoring program for the Slave River at the border with Alberta.

This increased monitoring was conducted to ensure that there was nothing from the Kearl mine incident that could cause harm to people, wildlife, or the environment.

We continue to work with our partners to review and assess results of this enhanced monitoring.

To date, nothing troubling has been found in our waters.

Mr. Speaker, our government also continues to monitor water quality beyond the Slave River. We have over 50 water quality monitoring sites across the NWT collecting samples and interpreting results to better understand the quality of our waters.

Through the Community-Based Monitoring Program, we work with partners from 21 communities to train local water monitors who then share what they learn with us to enhance our understanding of water quality across the territory.

These monitoring efforts span every water basin in the NWT. They help us spot potential problems, understand them, and act when necessary to address them.

Mr. Speaker, our government is also working to ensure that Northerners have a voice at the table related to oil sands.

After extensive lobbying, we have secured Indigenous representation from the NWT on the oilsands oversight committee struck by the federal and provincial governments.

Going forward, we will continue to ensure our voices are heard in discussions about releasing treated oil sands tailings.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to highlight what our government is doing to monitor and evaluate water levels and climate conditions prior to, and during spring break-up, to help inform the level of risk for flooding.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is a partner in the NWT Hydrometric Network, a group that measures water level and water flow. This Network consists of 106 monitoring stations across the NWT, and all of its data is publicly available.

The data from this Network was used by to issue a special NWT Water Monitoring Bulletin on May 5. This bulletin notified the communities and the public of the potential for high water levels and flow rates on the Peel and Arctic Red Rivers during break-up.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change commends the community of Fort McPherson and other communities at-risk of flooding for their work preparing for Spring break-up.

Our government will continue to work with emergency management officials at all levels to ensure they have the latest data on water levels and encourage the sharing of community information and photos related to current water level and ice conditions.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to keeping our territory's waters clean and safe now and forever. The actions we do every day will reflect that commitment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.