

Update on Taltson Hydro and Other Energy Initiatives

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the 18th Legislative Assembly, our government committed to explore options for renewable and alternative energy sources and to improve our energy conservation efforts. The 2030 Energy Strategy was released in 2018 to provide a long-term vision for energy use and supply in the Northwest Territories and we began implementing the six strategic objectives outlined in the Energy Strategy last year, through initiatives detailed in a three-year Energy Action Plan.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I will provide an update on our government's progress to advance the six objectives of the Energy Strategy, which will help build an energy system that contributes to the territory's economic, social and environmental well-being, while doing our part in the transition to a lower-carbon economy.

The first objective of the Energy Strategy is working together to find energy solutions through community engagement, participation and empowerment. Our government, along with the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, has engaged with many communities on a range of energy projects.

One example is a partnership between the Tulita Land Corporation and Northwest Territories Power Corporation to support a 40 kilowatt solar project that will be owned and operated by the community to reduce the use of diesel in the community. This project shows how communities can lead the way in creating local energy solutions.

Mr. Speaker, the Energy Strategy's second objective involves reducing greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation in diesel communities. After securing up to 30 million dollars from the federal government, the GNWT is in the final stages of the regulatory process for the Inuvik Wind Project, which will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the NWT's largest diesel community.

We also secured 15 million dollars in federal funding for a new and more efficient generator in Sachs Harbour that will use less diesel, and allow for the incorporation of wind power. This generator will be almost 20% more efficient than the old one and save about 50,000 liters of diesel per year. The GNWT has also erected a wind-monitoring tower in Norman Wells and continues to collect wind data in Sachs Harbour and Snare Rapids. Yet another example is the GNWT monitoring a water gauging station in Gameti to assess the potential for a mini-hydro project in the community.

The Energy Strategy's third objective is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. This is a particular challenge in our northern environment. Our government is currently conducting energy-efficiency retrofits on a Marine Transportation Services tug, through funding provided by the federal Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, or LCELF. This retrofit will reduce yearly greenhouse gas emission by over 800 tonnes, or about 286,000 liters of diesel per year.

Mr. Speaker, the fourth and fifth objectives of the Energy Strategy involve increasing renewable energy used for community heating and increasing commercial building energy efficiency. The GNWT secured over 7 million dollars from the LCELF and contributed an additional 2 million dollars over the next four years to provide the Arctic Energy Alliance with new funding to expand rebates, programs and services. Combined, this additional investment will result in an ongoing reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of 2,000 tonnes per year.

Through LCELF funding, our government launched the buildings and industry stream of the Greenhouse Gas Grant Program this past spring, providing over 2.5 million a year for industry, businesses and building owners to make energy-efficiency upgrades such as LED lighting and biomass heating.

The Energy Strategy's sixth and final objective is to have a long-term vision for the NWT's energy systems when developing our energy potential, addressing industry emissions, and doing our part to meet our national and international climate change objectives. Last year we secured over 10 million dollars from the federal government to upgrade the Snare Forks hydroelectric facility, which will reduce pressure on electricity rates. We also secured 2 million dollars in federal funding to expand the Taltson Hydroelectric System, with a commitment in the 2019 federal budget for an additional eighteen million dollars over the next three years.

Connecting the North and South Slave electrical systems would allow the resource sector to access clean, affordable energy and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It would also help to stabilize the cost of living and of doing business in the NWT. Our government is currently examining the feasibility of transmission options crossing Great Slave Lake, and is working with our Indigenous partners to define the project structure, business case and future field work.

Later today, Mr. Speaker, I will table the GNWT's Energy Action Plan Update, which summarizes what we accomplished in 2018 -2019, and describes in more detail energy initiatives planned for the next three years. I will also table the Energy Initiatives Report, which presents a high-level review of the NWT's current energy landscape, provides the GNWT's energy expenditures and GHG reductions, and showcases many of last year's energy initiatives. Together, these documents demonstrate our innovative approach to developing energy systems that will grow and diversify the economy, while reducing our reliance on imported fossil fuels.

Mr. Speaker, these successes demonstrate the GNWT's ongoing efforts to maintain strong partnerships with the Government of Canada as we continue to work toward enabling the NWT to transition to a strong, healthy economy that is less dependent on fossil fuels. These investments set the stage to achieve the strategic objectives I outlined today, and in turn, meet our goals to transition the NWT to a lower carbon economy, and build an energy system that will provide secure, affordable and sustainable energy for the people of the NWT.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker