

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – MARCH 3, 2009

**REVIEW OF POWER RATES AND POWER CORPORATION
OPERATIONS**

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Today I would like to follow up on some discussions held here in the House yesterday, on the different power-related reviews currently underway.

During this sitting, there has been a significant amount of discussion on highly controversial changes being put forward by Cabinet, specifically the changes to Supplementary Health Benefits and the direction taken on Board Reform. One of the most obvious problems with both of these initiatives is the lack of public consultation and research obtained in order to make informed decisions. The Regular Members' frustration with this type of direction peaked during the debate to revoke Cabinet appointments on February 6th.

Although the motion was defeated I believe that Cabinet heard what many of the Regular Members were saying. I'd even go so far as to say that improvement in communication between Cabinet and the Regular Members is already happening. An area that I feel demonstrates this is the direction cabinet is taking with respect to the three separate but related power reviews.

It's clear. Power rates are too high. They are negatively affecting residents throughout the NWT and something must be done. The reviews of the NWT Power Corporation and the separate electricity rate review will go a long way to encouraging public input and allowing the Government to get real concrete information and public opinion on where problems lie and

what some possible solutions might be. To their credit, Cabinet has met with Committee on several occasions to outline the process. Further, again yesterday, the Premier committed to getting terms of reference for the reviews to help put them into context. In the absence of the information that these reviews will provide, I believe that we'll be limited in our ability to make informed decisions on the future of power supply and rates in the NWT. So, I support Cabinet's direction on these reviews.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the ATCO proposal, I believe it would be irresponsible not to conduct a thorough review of this submission. We must know our options. We should leave no stone unturned.

Currently, I do oppose the sale of this critical asset. However, in the absence of information and analysis, which this review and the other two reviews will gather, it's a little premature to say that we know, absolutely, what's in the best interest of Northerners for both today and into the future. We need the information. So, I support the review of the ATCO proposal as well. As a note, I was very happy yesterday to hear the Premier state very clearly that Cabinet has not made a decision to sell the NWT Power Corporation to ATCO. Unless, the review clearly demonstrates that the sale to ATCO is in the best interest of all residents today and into the future and will reduce power costs there is no reason to sell it. Why sell our long term future for short term gain?

On issues of this magnitude we need to work together to make informed decisions that are in the best interest of all people of the Northwest Territories. The findings of these reviews will be a valuable tool as we

move forward. Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will have questions for the Premier. Thank you.

Questions

Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Premier and are in follow up to my member's statement.

1. How do you intend to share the information gathered by these three reviews with both regular MLAs and the public at large?
2. Other groups in the NWT are reviewing electricity rates as well. The NWT Association of Communities has just established a working group to review the electricity system in the NWT. How do you plan to include their findings in future decision making?
3. This is a significant issue of incredible importance to people of the NWT. As a result, decisions affecting the sale and/or continued operation of the NTPC must be done by this Assembly. Not just by Cabinet. How do you plan to actively engage the regular members in this process?
4. The final decision on any of these topics must be made by the 16th Assembly as a whole. Will the Premier commit to working with all MLAs equally in setting this governments direction on the future of power provision, maintenance and supply in the NWT?

