

HOME OIL SPILLS

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk a bit about a disturbing trend that has the potential to be extremely damaging to residents of the Northwest Territories. That trend is an increasing number of home heating oil spills.

Legislation in the NWT requires all home owners who experience a home heating fuel spill to report it to ENR. In 2007 there were 20 home fuel spills reported to ENR. In 2008 there were 32 home fuel spills reported to ENR. Already, in 2009 there have been 43 home fuel spills reported to ENR.

These numbers may also be lower than actual as some people may choose not to report due to fear of the potential costs for clean up. All homeowners are responsible under legislation to clean up their property when they have had an oil spill. Unfortunately, cleaning up oil spills on your property could be far more devastating to the pocket book than most people might think. The reason is the standard insurance policy requires that the insurer cover “damage to the existing dwelling and property”; property does not include land. As a result, home owners are on the hook for the cost of cleaning their land. The cost for cleaning up even the smallest of leaks is generally around \$10,000. Where the cost of living is already high, this can be the bill that pushes home owners past their financial brink. I know of one Yellowknife resident who had a spill that is going to cost in excess of \$60,000.

Due to the increasing number of spills the insurance industry is expecting to tighten up this practice considerably, sooner rather than later. This suggests to me that home owners will likely receive less coverage than they currently do. This is more bad news. I have talked with a number of business in town, in Yellowknife, involved in installing fuel tanks. They have

indicated that leaks are definitely on the rise, particularly with single walled tanks. One brand of oil tank that is causing problems and presenting challenges is Tidy Tank. It's my understanding that their single-walled tanks use lighter gauge metal than most other brands and they are springing leaks as early as one to three years after being installed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to send a message to the residents of the Northwest Territories. Please keep an eye on your tanks. Go out and check on them on a regular basis. Don't let them get to the point where they leak, especially if you happen to have a Tidy Tank, they provide a 12 month warranty.

If you are concerned with your tank, swap it out for a new one, preferably a double walled or double bottomed tank. If you must go to a single walled tank please consider going to one made of a higher grade metal. If you have the resources, consider going to a pellet boiler and avoid any possibility of oil leaks on your property. Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will have some questions for the Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources where I will be seeking his commitment to prepare and release a public service announcement warning home owners of the risks and potential ramifications of Home heating fuel leaks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.