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Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Impacts Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to speak about the Mackenzie gas project and how it will impact our territory. There is no doubt that the 22 communities located in the valley itself and along the proposed routing of the pipeline will see the largest socio-economic impacts.

Just last year, the federal government announced the establishment of a \$500 million socio-economic impact fund for communities along the proposed route to be compensated for being impacted by the pipeline.

Mr. Speaker, as we move closer to the development of this pipeline, the pending impacts in all of our communities will become more and more of an issue. How can a government which is a public government abandon 75 percent of our population? Mr. Speaker, I want to state again, like I did last year for the record, that quite clearly the \$500 million should go to the 22 communities along the route. They will need and they deserve every dime of that money.

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that 75 percent of our population and residents do not, and will not, have access to a fund designed to help mitigate social impacts because of this mega project. How could the Government of the Northwest Territories, or the federal government for that matter, believe that socio-economic impacts would stop at those communities deemed to be affected?

How can you build the \$9 billion mega project down the heart of our territory of 43,000 people and expect that only some communities will feel the effects? It is virtually impossible, Mr. Speaker. Is it the Government of the Northwest Territories' position today that communities like Yellowknife, like Hay River, Fort Smith, Behchoko, will not bear any social impacts as a result of the pipeline?

What about the aboriginal groups, Mr. Speaker? The Dogrib are left out of the funding. The Akaitcho and Yellowknives Dene are also on the outside looking in. I'm not sure why the government settled on accepting the \$500 million for just the 22 communities. In my mind, and in the minds of 75 percent of our people, the Government of the Northwest Territories has failed to protect the future interests of the majority of our residents.

I want to see our Premier talking to the federal government about establishing a second socio-economic impact fund for all the other communities and First Nations in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention, for the record, that we are on the verge of this \$9 billion mega project and we still have not got a resource revenue sharing deal, nor are we any closer to establishing a permanent trust fund or heritage fund from the Mackenzie gas project that will benefit future generations of our people. Mr. Speaker, these outstanding issues continue to be the shame of this government. Thank you.

--- Applause