

**15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly**

**Fourth Session**

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**Incentives For Northern Businesses**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to weigh in today on the discussion regarding the business incentive policy and the support, I believe, this government must continue to provide to northern businesses.

I am glad to hear that the government is not moving ahead with its intended plans to scrap the BIP and that there is room for the government to look at where we go from here. I have heard from a number of constituents over the past week with regard to the BIP. I do share their concern that the policy must not be dropped and, in fact, that the Government of the Northwest Territories has a perfect opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to open up the policy and strengthen it even more, so that true, 100 percent owned northern businesses can be treated with the preference that the original BIP was intended for.

As for the two percent tax cut for small business, this should just happen; no question. Small business remains to be the engine of our economy and they should be given every opportunity to succeed and the tax cut should take place. I am interested in hearing from the Minister what exactly the government's plans are for the BIP and whether or not strengthening is an option.

In my opinion, what we have to do is put more teeth in the BIP. The benefits must accrue to true, 100 percent owned northern businesses. Employees must live here; ownership must live here; taxes must be paid here. We can't continue to allow for absentee ownership or companies whose workforce just don't live here. We can't allow them to continue to benefit from the BIP. Mr. Speaker, it does a disservice to those who are true, 100 percent owned northern businesses.

As a government, we have to take the guesswork out of who is really northern and who isn't. Once this is done, I am certain the Minister can hope to cut down on the cost of administrating the policy. To me, it's quite simple: Either you are 100 percent northern or you're not. The criteria, Mr. Speaker, can be easily arrived at. We certainly do not want to lose more companies, people and economic opportunity to the South. We have to protect our own and no one else is going to do this for us, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Applause