

**15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly**  
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**Heating Costs In The North**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few years ago, the Government of the Northwest Territories recognized the impact of high fuel costs on residents and provided a one-time subsidy to households below a certain income threshold. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we thought prices were high then, I guess we didn't know how good we had it.

The price of heating fuel in Yellowknife is now at 71.5 cents per litre, up from 53.5 cents last year. That's a 34 percent increase. The price is over \$1 a litre in some Northwest Territories communities. This has had a tremendous impact on families and businesses to try to make ends meet. Mr. Speaker, no matter how efficient a home or building is, when you get days and weeks of 40 below temperatures, it's going to take a lot of fuel to heat the place.

The irony, Mr. Speaker, is that we are already producing oil and gas in our own territory. There was 20.4 billion cubic feet of natural gas during 2004 alone and an average of 20,000 barrels of oil a day from the Norman Wells field. Most of this is being piped down south and we are paying the fuel market price, plus a premium to have it trucked back up to us. It doesn't make sense. I know oil has been in the range of \$50 a barrel in the last several months, but when it's coming from our own backyard, it's unbelievable that it doesn't count for anything to insulate us from world markets.

Mr. Speaker, this is a problem that needs to be attacked with both short and long-term solutions. In the short term, I would suggest the government needs to consider reintroducing the fuel subsidy to give residents and businesses immediate relief to help cope with the rising fuel costs.

In the longer term, Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that in negotiating the socioeconomic agreement with the pipeline proponents, that the government is pursuing commitments from industry that will ensure we see a direct benefit from our own oil and gas. If the Mackenzie Valley pipeline goes through, are we still going to be waving good-bye to our resources at the wellhead and paying outrageous prices to bring them back? Why couldn't we have a small refinery in Norman Wells or Fort Simpson to supply this territory?

---Applause

What about piping natural gas directly into Yellowknife and other communities? I hope these options and others are being seriously explored and, later today, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. Thank you.

---Applause