

15th Legislative Assembly

**Third Session
February 9 - March 11, 2005**

MAR 8, 2005

The Northern Strategy

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to use my Member's statement today to address the proposed Northern Strategy. I am very happy that the federal government and the governing Liberal Party who have been in power in Ottawa for 13 years have finally realized that there is life north of 60.

---Applause

The strategy itself is long overdue and welcomed by all who call northern Canada home. Last week in this House, Members had an opportunity to speak to the Northern Strategy. I enjoyed listening to my colleagues on this side of the House as well as the Premier and Deputy Premier. We all share a love for the Northwest Territories. This is our home, and we represent all of the 42,000 people who live here.

---Applause

The residents of the Northwest Territories have put a tremendous amount of faith in us, as leaders, to deliver and finally get the Northwest Territories a fair and equitable deal on resource revenue sharing and devolution. Our job as Regular Members is to support and encourage our government to get a deal for us. I wanted to say that I believe the Premier is doing all he can to get some action out of Ottawa. He needs all of our support in this effort. Our future depends on it.

The Northern Strategy is a huge opportunity to show how different the Northwest Territories is. We have to demonstrate to the rest of Canada that we are deserving of special attention.

---Applause

Our economy last year grew 21 percent, compared to the Yukon economy which was stagnant, and Nunavut's economy which actually shrank. We are certainly a going economic concern.

What do we need in the strategy? We need some concrete examples from the federal government that shows they understand our situation. We must address the high cost of living here. With things like tax credits for interest paid on

mortgage payments; a living, breathing resource trust fund; value-added industrial development, to look at keeping some of the fuel here that is going to be leaving soon (and some already does in the Norman Wells pipeline), so people can actually afford to heat their homes; other tax breaks; and, a beneficial tax regime.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the other item missing from the strategy is an EDA, an economic development agreement with Ottawa.

---Applause

Why do we continue to be dealt only crumbs from Ottawa? The recent funding of \$90 million over three years split between three territories is almost insulting. Has anyone even ever figured out how to access this money and apply for the funding? I would be surprised if anybody really knows the answers to those questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause