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Risks Associated With the Bear and Taltson Hydro Projects

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to use my Member's Statement today to speak about the government's involvement in developing the NWT's hydro potential.

Firstly, I'd like to state that I am supportive of the economic activity and involvement in the communities that are spearheading both the Bear River hydro project and the Taltson expansion. I am fully aware of the excitement that both projects have on communities like Tulita, Deline and Fort Resolution. I've had an opportunity to sit through various briefings and information sessions on both projects and they are both exciting and potentially key pieces of strategic infrastructure here in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, by nature, I am a risk taker, especially when I can make some logical sense of what is at play. Thus far, in both cases I have seen the Government of the Northwest Territories assuming all the risk. Funding for both projects has been borne out of government funding and, if I could, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the government's attention to a section of the recent Auditor General's report which was tabled in this House last week.

Under Section 2.10, the Auditor General comments in regard to the failed loan guarantee to Deton' Cho Diamonds, and I quote, "...while the precautions that the government had built into the contract for the loan guarantee should reduce its losses, it also provided funding to the company through other programs and the total cost of this failed business to the government is not known with certainty at this time."

If that statement by the Auditor General doesn't scare our Premier and government, something is wrong. The funding to continue on with these projects and where it comes from is an issue we should all concern ourselves with. Also, Mr. Speaker, this issue has not had the benefit of being debated publicly, yet the government continues to throw caution to the wind and supply both projects with more money. Mr. Speaker, in both projects there is no customer and with no customer there is no business case that can be made for either project at this time.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have to look too far to find an example of a poor government decision on power infrastructure. The people, the Government of the Yukon and its energy corporation continue to pay dearly for the transmission line that runs into Faro, Yukon. Ratepayers in the Yukon will be paying for that mistake for generations to come, and I'm sure they cringe every time they have to pay a power bill in the Yukon.

We have to ensure that in both cases we have solid business cases before we proceed. If we do otherwise, we are failing to protect the financial interest of our residents. It reminds me of the movie Jerry McGuire, Mr. Speaker. They said, "Show me the money," and I say it to the Premier today, "Show us the customers." Thank you.