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Economic Losses from Migrant Workers

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak today about an issue that continues to cause a great deal of concern and frustration to many Northerners. That issue, Mr. Speaker, is the proliferation of migrant workers in this Territory.

The latest numbers put the figure at over 3300 migrant workers. These out-of-Territory workers take with them over \$350 million every year to southern Canada. Not only does this money not circulate in our local economies, Northerners looking for work are being denied access to jobs.

The extraction and removal of non-renewable resources and the benefits which should accrue to the people who live here has to be adjusted in a much more vigorous and vigilant way by this government. Far too often Northerners' companies or joint ventures are subcontracted to companies in southern Canada. Companies and contractors should be monitored to ensure that they are maximizing northern human resources in the execution of these contracts.

I want to share with you, briefly, a snapshot of what is happening. Northern company A gets a construction contract with Diamond Mine X. They subcontract the work to a southern company, which hires 40 people to do the work. Thirty-two are from Newfoundland, three from the other provinces and five are from the Northwest Territories, of which four are aboriginal. Of the roughly \$400,000 in wages per rotation available, \$330,000 leaves this Territory — \$300,000 to Newfoundland alone.

This is every rotation, Mr. Speaker, and just on one contract. In addition, wages for southern employees are subsidized to pay for their airfare back to and from their home province.

The government of the Northwest Territories is also guilty of bringing in migrant workers, many of whom are former employees working on contract for the government of the Northwest Territories. If former employees don't live here, don't bring them back. That is quite simple, Mr. Speaker.

We badly need a strategy to address migrant workers. It is bad enough that our share of resource revenue goes to Ottawa, but when money, jobs and opportunities are given away to southern Canada, then we need to do something about it.

We need to be working with industry to ensure any Northerner that is able-bodied and has the ability to work is given top priority. We need subsidized airfare from Yellowknife to Inuvik and to Fort Smith, rather than from Deer Lake and Gander, Mr. Speaker.