

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

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**Deh Cho Bridge Project**

**Mr. Ramsay:** I'm going to speak today about the Deh Cho Bridge project. I'm very concerned that the government is so far into this project that it now can't even begin to estimate what it would cost for us to get out of it.

Regular Members of the 15th Legislative Assembly passed two motions in this House — one in May of last year and the other in August — demanding an updated economic analysis and some detail on the concession agreement before it was signed. Mr. Speaker, we had assurances from the Premier that we would have that type of information prior to the government signing off on that project. As we all know, the deal was signed on September 28 — three days, 72 hours before the election on October 1.

The former Premier stated in the House on August 21 that “When we come to negotiations, we don't negotiate this in public any more than we negotiate most things that are negotiable in public. We are elected. We will do the negotiations. We will assess whether or not it is viable. We will go ahead based on whether or not it makes good economic sense.”

Mr. Speaker, like my colleague Mrs. Groenewegen, I am not an economist. But I do know that if you are going to go from a project cost of \$50 million to \$60 million to \$150 million and the net positive benefit of \$38 million to a negative impact of \$50 million, then it would be most prudent — especially if it's not your money but that of the residents of the Northwest Territories — to just say no to the project before signing off on it.

Mr. Speaker, it may be wise of us to ask for DNA samples from all the Ministers so that they can't conveniently claim it was the last government to sign the agreement so there's nothing for them to do. There are some things the Premier and the cabinet can and should be doing.

They should order a peer review of the financing of the project. They should develop a policy on future P3 investment and involvement. They should determine who is accountable for signing off on that agreement three days prior to the election.

Mr. Speaker, we're a small government. As I see it, we'll be on the hook for the project if traffic volumes don't materialize, if there's a design defect five years from construction, or if interest rates climb. If we index our \$4.5 million of government money over the next 35 years, that's \$264 million. Can we afford to do this? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker.