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Exemption From the Goods and Services Tax

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today about an issue that I have raised in this House before and one that over the past three years just has not seen any advancement. That issue, Mr. Speaker, is the exemption from paying the GST for the Northwest Territories and our two sister territories of Nunavut and the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be lobbying the federal government with a collective voice. The population of all three territories combined is only 85,000, about the same size as a city such as Red Deer. It would certainly not impact the federal government's bottom line much if they took a serious look at exempting the three northern territories from paying the GST.

Mr. Speaker, if the federal government is serious about Arctic sovereignty, social development, capacity building, and the health and well-being of people in the three territories, then they must find ways to ensure that we can attract doctors, teachers, nurses and others to the North to live here and raise families in our communities, and that those who are here today will have some incentive to stay.

Mr. Speaker, last winter I heard from constituents about high fuel costs and that people were struggling to pay for home heating fuel. This is in families, Mr. Speaker, where both the husband and wife are working full-time. The price of oil continues to rise almost on a daily basis. This, Mr. Speaker, is a very, very scary proposition for many families and homeowners across northern Canada, where it is winter seven to nine months of the year.

As a starting point, our government should be looking at supporting the Yukon government's move to lobby the federal government to remove the GST on home heating fuel, power generation and the transportation of essential goods north of 60. In a press release last month, the Yukon government said it would approach Nunavut and the Northwest Territories to join them in lobbying Ottawa for tax relief in these important areas.

Mr. Speaker, we are set to leave here in two days, and I'm wondering why our government hasn't put forward a motion similar to the one put forward by the Yukon government. Costs are rising daily in our communities. Our constituents need to have faith that we, as legislators, will do everything in our power to mitigate costs for our residents. A GST exemption on home heating fuel, power and transportation of essential goods would certainly be a great place to start, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.