

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

**Second Session  
Second Sitting  
May 22 – June 19, 2008**

**MAY 23, 2008**

**Deh Cho Bridge Project**

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the Premier's Budget Address yesterday and found it quite interesting that there was absolutely no mention of the \$165 million Deh Cho Bridge project. It didn't get any billing whatsoever from this government. Mr. Speaker, is that not a strange omission?

According to the government, isn't this \$165 million bridge supposed to reduce the cost of living? And wouldn't you think that the government would be boasting about this massive piece of public infrastructure? Or was it left out intentionally? Perhaps the government does not want any more attention given to this project, or perhaps it's embarrassed to have gotten into such a poor deal in the first place.

Many of my constituents and residents around the Northwest Territories do not understand, nor comprehend why, if we are in financial duress and expenses are outstripping our revenues, would we ever, ever sign on to a project that's going to increase our annual operational expenses by close to \$3 million per year indexed for the next 35 years.

Mr. Speaker, the bridge is going to be built. During questions to the Premier in October and in February, he did commit to having a post-mortem on finding out why the government signed the agreement three days before the last election and who was responsible for that action.

Mr. Speaker, I'm in receipt of a response to a set of written questions that I had asked the Premier in February – on February 8th, to be specific – regarding the Deh Cho Bridge concession agreement. I want to thank the Premier for the responses, but, Mr. Speaker, they only add more questions to what the government was thinking when they signed off on this agreement.

In response, the Government of the Northwest Territories finally admits to the public and to this House that they did not have an updated cost-benefit analysis done prior to signing that agreement. How could this ever, ever be allowed to happen with public funds, Mr. Speaker?

We had the discussion yesterday regarding the need for sound decisionmaking. How on God's green earth is this sound decision-making when the government was relying on a five-year-old cost-benefit analysis to sign off on a \$165 million concession agreement? Mr. Speaker, this is completely and utterly unacceptable and inexcusable, and especially since the deal itself was signed in a veil of secrecy. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you.