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Energy Conservation Contradiction

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to join my colleagues today in discussing issues related to power rates and the operation of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

Power rates and the operation of the NWT Power Corporation have been cause for much discussion and corresponding motions in this House over the five years that I've been here. There are some things I just don't understand when it comes to the NWT Power Corporation.

The first is that because of climate change and high prices for power, Northwest Territories residents have been doing all they can to limit their usage of power. The overall power consumption has been reduced in our territory because of conservation, Mr. Speaker. Why is it, then, that if conservation is taken seriously by our residents, rates are proposed to go up? People don't understand this, and I don't understand it, Mr. Speaker.

Also, the General Rate Application is predicated on the price of oil being \$140 a barrel. Over the past six months the price of oil has fallen to \$65 a barrel, and some economists and industry experts even predict \$50 a barrel by Christmas. This makes it very difficult for residents to understand why the increase to their power rates is necessary. The whole premise for the increase is now completely blown out of the water, Mr. Speaker. The government better get ready to explain and answer to residents across this territory this winter when they are hit hard by these increased rates.

Another thing I don't understand is why some communities in the Northwest Territories today are paying 25 per cent to 35 per cent more for power than other comparable communities serviced by the Power Corporation. Communities serviced by Northland Utilities, like Trout Lake, pay less than a counterpart community like Nahanni Butte, which is serviced by NWT Power Corporation.

In dealing with power rates, I'm of the belief that as a government, our first priority and responsibility is to deliver the best, most affordable power rates possible to our communities and the residents who live there. Why do we allow the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to continue to pay out bonuses to senior management when many in our communities struggle every month to pay the power bill?

We need to re-examine the entire structure of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation and its subsidiaries. It's getting overly complicated and difficult to understand its role and mandate. On behalf of the residents of the Northwest Territories, it's high time to take the action necessary to restore public confidence in the Northwest Territories Power Corporation. Mahsi.