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Suggestions for Economic and Cost of Living Issues

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been a Member of this Legislative Assembly for just over five years now, and I continue to enjoy bringing up issues that are important to both my constituents and residents in the Northwest Territories. I do believe it is easier to stand over here, day in and day out, and ask questions than it would be to be on that side of the House and answer them.

I have been very critical of this government's performance, because it's my job to do so. I am of the belief that if you are going to be critical, you should also provide suggestions on how you could do things better. I continue to find it very frustrating that I can stand here for five years and make suggestions to the government, and at the end of the day I have to wonder whether anyone over there is actually paying attention to what I'm saying.

For example, I've been asking questions and suggesting that a permanent trust fund, or heritage fund, be set up here in the Northwest Territories. It should be an integral part of any negotiation with Ottawa on resource revenue sharing and devolution. I have also been suggesting that the three northern territories be declared tax free zones in an effort to address the high cost of living, Arctic sovereignty and the inability to retain and attract health and other professional occupations.

For starters, Mr. Speaker, the federal government should immediately take the GST off home heating fuel for Northerners. For Northerners, we don't have much choice. Either we pay or we freeze. Where is the letter to the federal Minister of Finance asking and demanding that this be done?

Another suggestion that I have been making is: why is it the Government of the Northwest Territories seems to be the only one that stands to gain nothing out of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Gas Project? Yet we spend upwards of \$3 million a year getting prepared and over \$20 million to date. Prepared for what? To be taken advantage of? We should be demanding an equity stake in the pipeline.

Watching our resources go south while everyone is making money except for the Government of the Northwest Territories is not acceptable. We need to demand that we get access to the gas for our own citizens. Why should it be shipped south, processed and shipped back to us? So we can pay an exorbitant price for it? It makes no sense to me and it makes no sense to the residents, Mr. Speaker.

Those are a few examples and suggestions I've been making to government. I'm standing here every day waiting for someone to grasp something I have said. Again, I'm standing here every day waiting for someone to grasp something I have said. Unfortunately, I believe all they hear over there is the criticism. It's time they expand their horizons and actually listen to what I and other Regular Members on this side of the House are saying. We're not just criticizing. We're making suggestions in order that we can make consensus government work. Thank you.