

**16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly**  
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**ATCO Proposal to Merge With NWT Power Corporation**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today about the government's move to entertain a proposal from ATCO to merge in some fashion with the NWT Power Corporation.

Yesterday I had some questions for the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation about the high power rates residents are paying. The fact is that because consumption is down as a result of residents implementing energy efficiency in their homes and businesses, and what were sky high oil prices of \$140 a barrel, that is why the rates went up. Now oil is at \$40 a barrel and residents want some answers.

According to the Premier yesterday, these rates will not be reviewed again for three years. This is too long to wait. People can't afford these rates, even here in Yellowknife. That is why it is timely that the GNWT is at least exploring possibilities on the distribution and development of electricity here in the Northwest Territories. I believe we owe it to our residents to not just take the first proposal that comes through the door. We need to have an open and up-front process.

My fear is that in reviewing this one proposal, the GNWT's working team is comprised solely of senior bureaucrats. I have a great deal of respect for those involved, but the reality is that ATCO will be putting forth their 'A' team, make no mistake about this, on this merger proposal. We shouldn't fool ourselves. We will be swimming in a pool full of sharks in these discussions.

In order for the government to protect our residents, the corporation itself, and our interests, we should have at least two individuals assigned to our review team that have a background in power distribution, generation, and/or the sale of power, and are able to speak the same language as ATCO.

We also need to find out if there are other companies out there that may be able to put forward a proposal. Let's throw the doors wide open and go to an open, transparent call for proposals. Let's see what we can get back. As for now, we need to protect our residents from high power rates, and we cannot afford to lose more of our residents and population to the South due strictly to the high cost of living.

I agree that we should, at the very least, examine this proposal, but do so armed with some knowledgeable people who have a background in this very complex and specialized area. Mahsi.