

16th Legislative Assembly

Third Session Third Sitting May 27 – June 4, 2009

MAY 28, 2009

Promotion of the NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak today about the government's effort to promote the Northwest Territories in attracting both people and investment.

I have been very encouraged that the government has been making an effort at self-promotion. I believe that the Minister of ITI, Minister Bob McLeod, fully understands the importance of promoting our Territory. I want to thank him for his clever speech at the recent Meet the North conference in Edmonton. I was unable to be there in person, but have had the chance to read the speech and subsequent press release that detailed the top 10 reasons to live in the Northwest Territories.

Here in the Northwest Territories we are blessed with natural wonders like the Nahanni National Park, Great Bear and Great Slave lakes, the mighty Mackenzie River, the pingos and Aurora Borealis. Our resource potential is immense. The NWT still is the land of opportunity and is available to those who are seeking out that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, our greatest and most valuable resource continues to be our people. The people of the Northwest Territories are what makes living in this Territory so unique and such a pleasurable experience. The sense of community is something you just don't get in southern Canada. The Northwest Territories is full of unique residents all with their own story.

If we, as a government, are going to be successful at attracting new residents here, we need to come up with a marketing strategy that includes our residents and their stories. We need to take advantage of the exposure of shows like Ice Road Truckers has given us. Testimonials from our residents will resonate with persons in the South who are contemplating relocation.

The economic hardship currently being faced by residents in southern Canada should be seen by our government as an opportunity for us to showcase our people, our Territory and our opportunities to those folks. My family moved north from New Brunswick when I was a young boy and for our family it was the best move my parents could have ever made. And if you ask anyone who has moved away -- and many do move back -- what they miss the most about the North is the people.

So going forward we need to showcase our people, our greatest resource. I believe we need to get moving on a national marketing campaign, especially in hard-hit provinces like Ontario and Alberta, that will show people in southern Canada that opportunities are present here. Now is the time to get to work at attracting people here.

The Minister of Finance spoke earlier today of the importance of keeping people here. That was clearly stated in his financial update. People mean money, in terms of our formula financing payments from Ottawa. With revenues trending downward, I couldn't agree with Mr. Miltenberger more, that we had better start looking at opportunities and ways to address this issue.