

Energy Conservation

Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger

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Statement to the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier noted earlier, conservation and efficiency are critical elements in addressing the broad range of energy issues facing the Northwest Territories today. Conservation and efficiency provide an immediate response to the high cost of energy and, as a government, now form a part of our business-as-usual approach.

In addition, and perhaps more importantly energy conservation and efficiency help us to address one of the most serious environmental problems facing us today: climate change. Mr. Speaker, experts predict that unless efforts are made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we can expect to see an acceleration of negative climatic trends.

Between the skyrocketing prices of oil and the serious risks posed by climate change, it is clear we need to continue and strengthen our efforts around energy conservation and efficiency.

To address these issues, this Legislative Assembly approved funding for the energy conservation action plan to retrofit projects on public buildings, infrared thermal scanning on municipal and GNWT buildings and the implementation of new energy-efficient design standards for GNWT buildings. Additional funding was also provided to the Arctic Energy Alliance to supplement existing incentive programs.

An important part of this action plan is the development of a new approach to energy use. The first step in the process was the identification of three strategies for improving northern energy management:

1. energy conservation within government;
2. energy conservation in NWT homes; and
3. the anti-idling project.

The underlying goal of all three strategies is improving energy use in the NWT through disseminating knowledge, developing skills and improving attitudes towards energy conservation.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important parts of this program is the marketing and promotional effort to increase energy conservation awareness in the Northwest Territories. This work was undertaken through the Arctic Energy Alliance and built upon public education awareness programs currently offered by that

organization. Among the initiatives undertaken is the development of an Energy Efficiency Tips for Homeowners video designed to provide information and instructions on the basic, feasible and cost-effective improvements homeowners can do to make their homes more energy efficient.

The EnerGuide for Housing Program was one of the greater successes of the 2005-06 action plan. By the end of March 2006, over 60 households received incentives through the program. The average incentive paid per household was \$820, resulting in estimated annual energy savings of \$2,000 per household and an annual reduction in CO2 emissions of over six metric tons per household.

To ensure we continue to build on these results, the government will maintain support for existing residents by following through on conservation initiatives identified by the Arctic Energy Alliance in 2006-07.

Due in large part of the new funding provided for the energy conservation action plan, this government's overall spending levels for energy conservation and efficiency programs are higher than in the past. Over the coming months we will continue to develop and implement this action plan and will provide Members with a progress report during the fall session.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to support conservation and efficiency measures as the most effective means of coping with the high costs of energy.

In addition to this, we will, over the summer months, be updating the NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy to ensure we have a focused approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and are planning for the impacts of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, emission reduction efforts must continue to be initiated across a number of sectors involving communities, energy suppliers, residential homeowners, non-government organizations and industrial energy consumers.

As a major contributor to the NWT's overall greenhouse gas emissions, industry has a responsibility, as good corporate citizens, to continue to explore and implement innovations to reduce emissions and, in doing so, conserve energy. Efforts to date have included wind energy monitoring to assess feasibility of using wind power, increasing heat recovery through modifications to powerhouse engines and optimization of generators to reduce energy consumption and emissions.

Mr. Speaker, we feel that by taking the right steps and making the right investments now, we will be in a position not only to reduce our overall energy costs, but, more importantly, to reduce our overall greenhouse gas emissions.

That, Mr. Speaker, is a goal we can all be proud of. Thank you.

