

Energy Priorities

*Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger
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HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories supports global and local actions to reduce emissions of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

We continue to build on our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by advancing a number of alternative energy sources. This government's energy priorities include solar, wind, hydroelectricity, geothermal and biomass energy projects.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has taken on the challenge of expanding the use of solar, wind, geothermal and biomass energy.

Although widely used elsewhere in the world, the technologies involved in using these energy sources are relatively new to the Northwest Territories. Through a combination of studies, business case assessments, subsidies and demonstration projects, ENR is making important progress toward expanding the use of alternative energy sources.

Mr. Speaker, experience has shown us that photovoltaic technology is a reliable and cost-effective source of renewable energy for small off-grid camps and residences. We are seeing more remote camps and lodges installing solar panels and battery systems to supplement or replace gas and diesel generators because it saves them money. Solar photovoltaic systems have been installed on buildings in Sachs Harbour, Inuvik, Wekweeti, Ulukhaktok, Paulatuk, Behchoko and Yellowknife.

ENR is working with the Northwest Territories Power Corporation and Northland Utilities on a net billing pilot project so that we can start testing the cost and reliability of solar power on community grid systems. Funds are available for residents and communities that want to join in this pilot project.

ENR is now preparing a NWT Solar Energy Strategy to coordinate these actions and prepare a path forward so that we can take full advantage of energy from the sun using this technology.

Some of the best potential for geothermal energy in Canada has been found in the southern part of the Northwest Territories. This heat from beneath the earth's surface has the potential to produce power and provide heat to meet the needs for communities and reduce their reliance on diesel fuel.

Consideration potential for geothermal energy from the Com Mine shafts and tunnels exists right under the city of Yellowknife. The tunnels and shafts from old mining

operations could provide a thermal reservoir for a district heating system that provides all the heat needed for buildings in the downtown core. A business plan for this project is at the development stage. Another geothermal pilot project to provide one megawatt of electric generation capacity in Fort Liard is also in the business plan development stage.

Wind is the most available renewable energy source in our High Arctic communities. A wind energy project is being developed in Tuktoyaktuk to develop the capacity and experience needed to incorporate wind energy into existing energy systems as has been done in Alaska. ENR continues to work Dowland Contracting and interested community members to finalize plans to install wind turbines in Tuktoyaktuk in the summer of 2011. ENR is also preparing plans to implement wind power in Ulukhaktok, Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour in future years.

Mr. Speaker, wood has always provided a sustainable source of heat in the Northwest Territories. The development of new efficient technologies has made wood a reliable source of energy for large-scale applications. Work is underway to determine the feasibility of harvesting biomass in Fort Providence and Fort McPherson. A feasibility study on producing wood pellets in the Northwest Territories is also being done.

Biomass energy projects are currently underway in Kakisa, Fort McPherson, Behchoko, Whati and Yellowknife. As Members know, proper forest management practices must be applied to ensure that the harvest of local wood supplies remains sustainable. ENR is committed to ensuring the sustainability of our forest resources as we work to expand the use of biomass.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is committed to building on and increasing our renewable energy projects and expanding the use of greener renewable energy sources. As a government, we are working to become a leader within Canada on alternative sustainable energy. We are committed to advancing our energy priorities in the form of solar, wind, geothermal, hydroelectricity and biomass energy. I believe our work in these areas will not only help cut greenhouse gas emissions, but will also help reduce the overall cost of living for our residents.

As the cost of fossil fuels increase and we become more concerned with the real threat of climate change, we must adopt these alternative energies to ensure a more sustainable future for the next generation.