

Environment and Natural Resources Highlights

Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger

June 2, 2009

Statement to the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Speaker, as part of the 16th Legislative Assembly's vision and priorities, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is responsible for ensuring our environment will sustain present and future generations.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has outlined a number of strategic initiatives to ensure residents of the NWT can continue to enjoy a prosperous and sustainable environment.

The environment is of great importance to the people of the Northwest Territories. While residents are fortunate to have clean air and water and productive forest, land, and wildlife, pressures exist that must be monitored and mitigated.

Climate change, for example, is a growing concern that can significantly disrupt our environment and affect the ability of northerners to lead healthy and productive lives. Increased human activities, changes to the world economy, and increasing pressures on NWT resources are also affecting the NWT environment.

ENR continues to work with partners on protecting territorial waters. Through continued discussion with communities and Aboriginal organizations, a draft NWT Water Management Strategy is being developed to define a comprehensive, collaborative approach for the NWT. Recognizing that land and water cannot be separated, ENR has created a land and water unit to integrate our efforts in land use planning, protected areas, and water stewardship.

ENR continues to support residents, businesses, and communities to reduce energy consumption and implement alternate energy solutions. Conservation programs, direct consumer rebates and enhanced support for the Arctic Energy Alliance has made the NWT one of the most progressive jurisdictions in Canada in this area.

Our energy efficiency incentive program, for example, provided a total of 763 rebate cheques creating \$551,000 in energy savings and 1,800 tonnes of CO₂ reductions.

We are also taking action to develop wind energy resources in the NWT. Plans are under way to have four wind turbines installed and operational in Tuktoyaktuk by the summer of 2011. Twenty percent of Tuktoyaktuk's annual electricity needs could be met with a four-turbine configuration. The project will save 88,000 litres of diesel per year and will result in a reduction of 247 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions during each

year of operation. Monitoring in Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok, and Sachs Harbour show that these communities are good candidates for subsequent wind turbine installations.

A biomass strategy will be prepared to guide increased use of biomass energy in the Northwest Territories. The strategy will, amongst other things, discuss the efficient use of firewood and wood pellets to heat homes and businesses. Over the summer months ENR will also investigate options around creating wood pellets and chips right here in the Northwest Territories, further reducing our reliance on imported oil.

ENR is preparing a draft NWT climate change adaptation plan to be released this summer. The adaptation plan proposes new actions to support communities and regions in their efforts to address problems caused by climate change. Consultation with communities and regions will be a key component of this plan.

ENR continues to work with its management partners to manage wildlife populations. An NWT bison management strategy was completed and consultations with residents, Aboriginal governments, and interested parties are under way. A revised NWT action plan for Boreal caribou is complete and being sent to co-management boards for approval.

ENR also worked closely with land claim organizations and wildlife co-management boards to draft the Species at Risk legislation using a collaborative drafting process. The new Wildlife Act will be developed using the same collaborative working group process.

To better inform users and to help ensure the environment remains sustainable the department has developed the first ever State of the Environment Report. This initiative will help keep residents and decision makers informed on the state of our environment, biodiversity, and natural resources in our Territory. Later this afternoon I will be tabling a copy of the highlights of this document from this report.

Finally, the Department is continuing to expand its waste reduction and recovery programs. A paper products diversion initiative has been initiated to investigate and develop creative solutions for diverting paper products from community landfills.

In March 2009, a public awareness campaign was launched to encourage voluntary reduction of single use retail bags and, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that the Beverage Container Program launched in 2005 has diverted almost 82 million beverage containers from our community landfills.

These initiatives and others undertaken by ENR help move us towards our mutually agreed upon goals of protecting our water using alternative energy sources, mitigating the impacts of climate change and ensuring the long-term sustainability of our environment. Thank you.