

Kyoto Protocol

Hon. Brendan Bell

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

Statement to the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise that the Kyoto Protocol comes into effect internationally today.

As Members are aware, the Kyoto Protocol falls under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It establishes targets for developed nations to start curbing their greenhouse gas emissions.

Canada's target is to reduce emissions to six percent below 1990 levels starting in 2008. Currently there is no Kyoto target for the Northwest Territories or any other provincial or territorial jurisdiction. The Canadian target is for national emissions only.

Mr. Speaker, this government supports actions to reduce emissions and plan for climate change adaptation because we know, firsthand, that climate change is a concern to residents of the Northwest Territories. We are experiencing many of the changes described in the recent Arctic Council Impact Assessment on Climate Change, changes the Arctic Council believes will accelerate as greenhouse gases accumulate in the atmosphere.

These changes are already impacting the people of the Northwest Territories. We are already seeing increased costs for constructing and maintaining infrastructure, roads and buildings because of changes in our permafrost regimes. We are also beginning to experience greater unpredictability in our weather here in Northern Canada.

In 2001 RWED led efforts to develop a NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy. Despite our limited resources Mr. Speaker, this government, the Arctic Energy Alliance and the Northwest Territories Power Corporation have undertaken many initiatives to improve energy efficiency and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories. Some key actions include: · promoting public awareness and understanding; · increasing energy efficiency in public facilities; · assisting communities in developing progressive energy plans; · promoting renewable energy, including an expanded role for hydro-electricity in the NWT; and · encouraging industry to use best technologies and to adequately plan climate change-related adaptations during the environmental review process

The Department is currently leading a review and update of priority actions for the NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy, with climate change stakeholders in the NWT. The review will also focus on effective adaptive measures. Mr. Speaker, I hope these actions will make us, as a government and as individuals, think and act more responsibly about our current levels of use of fossil fuels. As we continue to address the high cost of energy in the Northwest Territories, we will need to ensure that other sources of energy are

seriously considered, such as hydro-electricity and renewable energy sources and that we all do our part to use energy wisely.

The Government of Canada has issued a challenge to every Canadian to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by one tonne per year per person. I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly and every resident of the NWT to take the One Tonne Challenge. Fewer emissions will help protect our climate and contribute to cleaner air and healthier communities for all of us. Seriously consider using less energy, reducing waste and conserving water in your daily life. You'll be surprised at how quickly you can meet the one-tonne challenge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker