

Uranium Contaminated Soil Removal

Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger

March 5, 2009

Statement to the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise Members that the last bags of uranium contaminated soil from Tulita were received at a licensed waste disposal facility in the United States earlier this year.

The uranium ore was mined at Port Radium from 1942 until 1960. It was transported in bags down the Great Bear River by barge, portaged by truck at the rapids and loaded onto another barge. Tulita was used as a transfer point for the ore because of its location at the confluence of the Mackenzie and Great Bear rivers. During transfer, ore leaked from the bags into the soil at Tulita.

Clean up of the uranium contaminated soil began in the 1980s. The soil was placed in a mound in a secure area near the Tulita airport while the federal government determined a final disposal option. In 2006, the contaminated soil was packaged into water resistant bulk storage bags for eventual transport to long-term storage or disposal.

Last October, the bags were finally loaded onto barges and transported to Hay River for shipment south to Grande View, Idaho.

Mr. Speaker, I'm advised that Mr. Gordon Yakeleya, whose yard was remediated during the clean up, loaded the last bag of uranium contaminated soil onto the barge.

It's taken 15 years to get the contaminated soil removed from the community.

I would like to commend MLA for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya, for his work in persuading the federal government to expedite the removal and disposal of the uranium contaminated soil.

Tulita was not the only contaminated site along the northern transportation route used to ship uranium ore from Port Radium to Waterways, Alberta. Other sites can be found at Sawmill Bay, Great Bear River, Bell Rock, Fort Smith and Fort Fitzgerald.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources officials will continue to work with the federal government to expedite the continued clean up of the remaining sites along the northern transportation route. Mahsi.