

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 489-18(3): REDUCTION OF NON-RENEWABLE ENERGY USE

November 1, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I referred to the announcement this week of an additional \$1.8 million over four years under the new government Greenhouse Gas Grant program, and I note that this program is aimed at government's reductions of greenhouse gas outputs from non-renewable energy sources. My question for the Minister is: can he tell me why a decision was made to introduce programming that in the end perpetuates fossil fuel use rather than devoting more substantial funds to these governments' introduction of fully renewable energy systems? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we developed the 2030 Energy Strategy we had to go out and have a look at everything and talk to everybody and have consultation about what residents felt that was important to them across all links of government and people in the Northwest Territories, and this was one of the programs in many that we are introducing in the 2030 Energy Strategy that needed to be looked at. It was felt that this needed to be funded in this manner, so it's one of the decisions that came out of that process.

MS. GREEN: Thanks to the Minister for that. The question that I have is how the Minister balances the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions versus replacing fossil fuel use altogether. How is that balance determined?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: When we went out and did our consultation it was clearly stated that we need to have a secure, safe, reliable source of energy. Technology is not there to totally switch to totally renewables for us and particularly because we have such a vast territory that we have to have fuel in to some of these smaller communities, such as Sachs Harbour, Ulukhaktok, and Paulatuk, which is a challenging environment. That is why we are doing our wind studies up in that type of environment, to see if it's feasible. So we have to balance this up. Technology is not there to totally get us off of fossil fuels and into renewables.

MS. GREEN: Under the GNWT's carbon pricing scheme the large industrial producers of greenhouse gas will get 75 percent of their taxes rebated; 25 percent goes into a special fund. I truly believe that industry would take more aggressive action on reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and replacing fossil fuel if they were asked. So in developing this element of the plan what evaluation was made of how less rebate and more project support would influence industry to make these changes?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: We all know that the large industry emission people in the Northwest Territories are the mining industry. These people are already located in a situation where they are off the road system, they are off hydro. They have to make their most efficient operation they possibly can to keep their costs down. This fund we set up

as 75/25 is going to be able to help them come up with new types of approaches to be able to get them off of fossil fuels, and it's a balanced approach that, like I have said, we have had to do across the Northwest Territories. The mining industry is a big part of helping us try to come to some type of solution, but they are trying to mitigate their costs in what they are doing presently.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that. Finally I note that recently announced spending under the federal-territorial low carbon leadership fund provides support for carbon sequestration in forestry. This would hardly seem to me to be a priority against the more pressing needs of, say, aggressively improving the energy efficiency of government housing stock, so can the Minister explain why the emphasis was put, again it's the balance thing, but on sequestration rather than energy improvements to public housing?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: The Low-Carbon Economy Leadership Fund does have money in there for helping to gain efficiency in public housing. There is a significant amount in there. Again we have had to take a balanced approach to this whole aspect of how we are going to lower greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories, but the other side of it is that on these applications there are certain criteria that we have to fulfill to meet federal funding and, to be able to access some of this money, we have had to spread it around and try to help all parts of the economy in the Northwest Territories. This is one of the ones that has come forward, and we are working with ENR on that to move the carbon sequestration forward for reforestation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.