



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

18th Assembly

ROUND TABLE

Monday, December 14, 2015

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Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Great Slave)

Mr. Bob McLeod
(Yellowknife South)

Mr. Wally Schumann
(Hay River South)

Mr. Tom Beaulieu
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

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(Hay River North)

Ms. Caroline Cochrane
(Range Lake)

Mr. Alfred Moses
(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Mr. Kieron Testart
(Kam Lake)

Ms. Julie Green
(Yellowknife Centre)

Mr. Michael Nadli
(Deh Cho)

Mr. Shane Thompson
(Nahendeh)

Mr. Jackson Lafferty
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, December 14, 2015****Members Present**

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Ms. Cochrane, Ms. Green, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Bob McLeod, Mr. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Mr. Schumann, Mr. Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

Call to Order

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Good morning, Members. I will ask that you rise and join us in prayer with Mr. Lafferty leading the prayer.

Prayer

---Prayer

**Opening Remarks by the
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly**

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Welcome again to all Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly.

Today is the commencement of your priority-setting exercise. It's a real change in focus and work that you've been doing for the last two weeks in setting priorities for the 18th Legislative Assembly on a go-forward basis.

The priorities that you discuss in this House today will form the basis of a priority statement that will be tabled in the Legislature this coming Thursday. Once that priority statement is agreed upon, Members of the Executive Council, who are scheduled to be appointed later this week, will take those priorities and use them to draft a mandate, which will then be brought back to Caucus one or more times to set a very specific governing and focused document for the governance of the 18th Legislative Assembly.

This is the first time this meeting has been held in public and we will go around the table in alphabetical order by constituency name. Firstly, I wish to advise Members that these proceedings are being broadcast on the Legislative Assembly's television network throughout the Northwest Territories as well as being live web-streamed on the Legislative Assembly's Internet website. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and will be provided to Members later this evening and tomorrow for their reference and use.

My name is Tim Mercer. I'm the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. I will be presiding over your proceedings today.

Just a few comments before we get started in terms of the rules of today's meetings, which you have agreed to. As I mentioned earlier, we will go around the table in alphabetical order by constituency name. Each Member will be provided up to 15 minutes to make a statement on their priorities for the 18th Legislative Assembly. I will ask you to remain seated while you speak. Parts of today's proceedings will be interpreted in the Tlicho language. When you require interpretation in that language, please turn your headsets to channel 1.

We will take a break at approximately 10:30 a.m. this morning and again at noon for a lunch break. We will reconvene at 1:00 p.m. this afternoon, and depending on how much progress we're making, we will take a break before we conclude the proceedings at the end of the day today.

There will be Pages joining us and have just joined us in the Legislative Assembly Chamber this morning. If you require the assistance of a Page, either for water or to transmit a message to one of your colleagues, please raise your hand and the Page will come to your desk and assist you.

As normal, you do not need to activate the mics in the Chamber today. The mics will be activated automatically for you when you are recognized by the chair.

Before I turn the floor over to Mr. Nadli, the Member for Deh Cho, I will ask all Members and members of the public to please turn your cell phones to silent. That being said, are there any questions from the floor in terms of process before we begin today? Seeing none, I will turn the floor over to Michael Nadli, Member for Deh Cho. Mr. Nadli.

Round Table Speeches by Members**Mr. Michael Nadli's Speech**

MR. NADLI: Good morning, colleagues. My name is Michael Nadli, Member for Deh Cho. I am from Fort Providence where I was raised and continue to make it my home. I am the father of two children and soon to be a grandfather for the first time.

As the Deh Cho MLA, I represent the communities of the Hay River Reserve, Enterprise, Kakisa and Fort Providence. I was first elected in 2011 and this

is my second term. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents for their support. I can only state that I will do my best to serve you in the 18th Assembly.

I would like to take a few moments to speak in my language and then in English to highlight what I've heard during this recent campaign and what I believe are the priorities for the Deh Cho riding for the upcoming four years, providing some reflection upon the 17th Assembly and then offer some closing remarks.

What I heard during the campaign, in no particular order, was elderly care. Elders need to be respected and taken care of. Housing maintenance is a concern. People need assistance and service in their heating and electrical systems in their homes to run in an energy-efficient manner. Land tenure and taxes, the First Nations people are paying land taxes in spite of promises made in treaties. Working relationships between community health centres and district offices need to be improved in delivering health care. Decentralization should not be limited to district centres only, but small communities as well. The need for infrastructure, new schools for primary grades and high schools, improved telecommunications for public safety and convenience, water treatment facilities, youth centres, trade centres, Slavey immersion schools, the need to maintain winter roads and make improvements to those existing roads.

The Deh Cho riding residents – some of them are qualified workers – cannot get work in the mines. Forestry is cutting back on forestry towers. Wild morel mushrooms should be categorized like harvesting assistance programs. Experienced forest fire workers are being forced out of work because of territorial and national physical exams. Regional land claims are taking too long. There is a need for economic development to create jobs and business opportunities. There are concerns about fracking and its potential negative impacts to the environment. There are concerns about water and its quality. More needs to be done for youth. We need to work with them for them to learn traditional skills. There is concern about Aboriginal languages, their status and efforts to enhance and revitalize them.

Obviously, this is not a complete list of concerns and issues of the Deh Cho. I will work over the next four years to ensure the concerns and issues of our constituents are raised, given opportunities in the House.

I want to congratulate all my fellow MLAs who were elected. I look forward to working with all of you, as colleagues and friends, to make the NWT the best place to live. I also want to thank all of the candidates who put their names forward, making it

a key public democratic progress of public discussion and debate and providing choices for residents in selecting their representatives.

I also acknowledge the commitment of past MLAs who were not elected or chose not to run. To them I say you left us big shoes to fill and that your trails are still blazing. Choosing to work as an MLA, sometimes you are chosen and you need to commit yourself to be the public face and voice of your people. We want to make a difference in the lives of our people, families, communities and the NWT.

I recall thinking of a leader's position when I was told to sit down on the spruce boughs and listen. As leaders, we will be reminded if we get too far ahead of our people, we have to listen, not only with our ears but with our hearts. A humbling experience it was when I was told to listen. I remain deeply honoured to have worked with many elders, some of them who have passed on and some who remain.

Looking back to the 17th Legislative Assembly, I feel the heavy lifting was commendable and accomplishments were made. Devolution is one example. I voted against devolution, and despite that, it has gone forward. We have also developed legislation for the following: the Wildlife Act; the Northern Employee Benefits System; the Liquor Act for the Sahtu; the Mental Health Act, to name a few of our achievements made through public consultations in the principles of the consensus process.

We listen to everyone and we consider all sides. Being hard on the issues and soft on the people is our challenge and we must continue that path.

In terms of constituent matters from the 17th Assembly, most particularly in my riding, relate to the concerns of the quality and effectiveness of health care, the lack of services and support for disabled persons, income support programs in relation to public relations treating people with respect, concerns of housing and the public housing rental system, the care of the elderly, child care services to ensure all children are loved and cared for, and the need to enhance public communications for public safety and information.

In looking forward to the 18th Assembly, I put forth the following priorities for the Deh Cho riding. I want to work to address those priorities with the rest of the people of the NWT.

The completion of the outstanding land claims. Treaty 8 and 11 of 1899 and 1921 remain as historic and contentious agreements, depending on what side you are on. For Dene, it is about honouring the words of our forefathers, to uphold peace and friendship as long as the river flows and the grass grows. There are about a dozen negotiating tables that need to be concluded to final

agreements. We can focus on the negotiating process itself or the parties involved. Through the increased responsibilities for public lands and resources, my hope is that the increased authority will not entrench power and wield a big stick in order for progress to be made.

I would like the 18th Assembly, Regular MLAs and Cabinet, to revisit the negotiations mandate that we give GNWT negotiators to ensure fair and amicable agreements are reached. I firmly believe that focusing on the big picture serves a purpose and that we all need to reaffirm the common interests we have.

In the environment and areas of renewable and non-renewable resource development, we need to ensure we have objective criteria, such as land use plans, and consider thresholds in terms of aging footprints that sometimes could be at an industrial scale or none at all.

The people. Our greatest resource is our people, individuals and families who make up the NWT. The basic needs of food, shelter and a sense of belonging are in some cases a matter of survival. We must ensure that the quality of life of our people is our biggest priority. We need to respect and take care of our elders and youth, so that the teachings of the past can help the hope of our future.

We need to keep focusing on improving the housing system; create jobs and business opportunities; provide assistance for homelessness; admit, not deny, the need for addiction centres and programs that run culturally appropriate teachings for healing and wellness, including on-the-land programs; address the crime and unemployment rate; examine closely the home care programs in light of the increasing senior-aged population; and improve facilities and programs for the disabled.

The economy. Our reliance on the mining industry is good, but as we recently learned of the closure of Snap Lake Mine, we can't put all of our eggs in one basket. We need to diversify the economy so that sectors such as tourism and a traditional economy are supported. Equally, we must consider alternative energy sources, including the continuation of the biomass initiatives.

The environment. It is essential that we balance the need for economic development while maintaining the integrity of the environment for future generations. The picture is clear; there needs to be an integration of land use plans across the NWT so that values are considered when considering development on the land and on the water.

Communities. Coming from a small community, it is essential that local governments have proper resources to manage programs and services such as recreation and municipal services, to list a few. The lack of economic activities and infrastructure

projects such as building of roads and bridges or facilities provide badly needed jobs and business opportunities for small communities. Therefore, it is essential that our communities are in a position to participate in the capital planning process effectively. Working within fiscal constraints, more planning and working together would be essential in determining whether communities construct new buildings or operate existing ones. We need to not forget the promise of devolution, and also promised decentralization of jobs to not only district centres but communities.

The high cost of living. The price of goods is higher because of the remoteness of the NWT and the communities. The GNWT must continue insisting federal initiatives continue in supplementing cost of transportation of bringing goods into remote communities, as one example. Further, that this government puts stronger efforts in the expansion of traditional harvesting such as trapping and fishing. The simple solution in terms of the high costs of living is addressing the domestic production of food. Therefore, it is imperative that the establishment in support of agricultural development is continued.

Finally, I look forward to the ongoing work in the following areas: the establishment of an ombudsman, the updating of the Forest Management Act, the move towards ground ambulance for communities and highways, the Path to Wellness approach, the Education Renewal, Junior Kindergarten, Agricultural Strategy, Tourism 2020, and expanding the single-window service centres.

In closing, I will commit myself to working with all four communities that I represent and their leaders. To that end, I plan to meet with leaders annually to ensure communication and cooperation. I look forward to the new Liberal government's response to the Truth and Reconciliation report in addressing the generations of residential schools and the impact it's had on the indigenous peoples. My hope is that the GNWT will actively continue its role in implementing change with the TRC, such as the work on the missing and murdered women inquiry.

On a personal note, I acknowledge that I had an incident that caused pain and hurt to my family. I have taken full responsibility for my actions. I made a mistake. I was wrong. I am taking steps to ensure that such an incident does not happen again and I'm taking steps to better myself. I am going forward on a path to healing and wellness. I am not ignoring the incident. The NWT has the highest rate of domestic violence in Canada. Domestic violence has to stop. Men must stop hurting their families. As our elders would say...[English translation not provided]...slow down and listen. Mahsi.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you very much, Mr. Nadli. Next we have Mr. Kevin O'Reilly, Member for Frame Lake. Mr. O'Reilly.

Mr. Kevin O'Reilly's Speech

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to start with an outline of my statement on priorities. I'd like to talk a little bit about how I set the priorities that I'm going to talk about shortly. I'll present some high-level priorities with some actions that I hope can help meet them. I want to talk a little bit about how we work together, and then I have a few closing remarks.

In terms of how I set the priorities that I'm about to talk about, these obviously came up during the election campaign. We've had extensive briefings from GNWT departments over the last week. We had a meeting on Saturday with northern leaders, and I've been listening carefully to what the other MLAs have been saying. So, I've identified three high-level priorities that I believe are appropriate for the 18th Assembly.

The first one – and I heard a lot about this during the campaign – was reducing the cost of living. I believe we need to focus on systemic changes that will reduce our cost of living by building more self-sufficient communities. This will also help diversify our economy and can help with climate change. We need to reduce the cost of energy by expanding energy conservation and conversion programs through Arctic Energy Alliance. We can make these programs more accessible to condominiums and lower income families through a revolving fund. Loans are provided to cover capital costs and are paid back over time through savings on energy bills. This may also require working with local governments to give them authority to enter into or administer such programs.

We should also refocus the Northwest Territories Power Corporation towards community energy self-sufficiency, rather than relying on big projects in big grids.

We should build stronger food security to help lower our cost of living by promoting more local food production through community gardens, commercial market gardening and rejuvenation of local fisheries.

Finally, we need to work with the Yukon and Nunavut to ensure that the federal government increases and indexes the northern residents tax deductions, including setting and publicizing a fair value for lowest return airfares, instead of making us guess and then get audited.

We also need to work together on Nutrition North.

My second priority, getting a resource management house in order, or the evolve part of devolve and evolve.

We need to develop and put in place a systematic review of all the 26 pieces of mirrored legislation that were passed in a frenzy in March 2014 to facilitate devolution with virtually no public review. A systematic review could be done as a joint committee with Regular MLAs and Cabinet in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Council on Lands and Resource Management.

We did not get devolution to replicate the systems put in place by the federal government. We need a roadmap and set of principles to guide us in how we want to manage our own resources. For example, we need to ensure there is a fair return to the public purse from our resources. In 2015-16, GNWT will raise more money from taxes on alcohol and tobacco - \$37 million – than we will get to keep from resource revenues, less than \$30 million. This does not seem right to me. We should be managing our oil and gas resources using an independent body modelled after the co-management boards where Aboriginal governments are partners, rather than house this authority with the same GNWT Minister who promotes resource development.

We also need to protect the public from further liabilities from resource development through mandatory financial security, rather than the discretionary disjointed system that is currently in place.

We need to ensure that our Heritage Fund has a legislated and defined revenue stream with clear objectives and strong public governance to share some of the benefits with future generations from our non-renewable resources.

Another necessary part of this getting our resource management house in order will be to complete land rights agreements with the Dehcho, Akaitcho, the Northwest Territories Metis Nation and other Aboriginal governments. I look forward to a new approach from GNWT and stronger oversight by the Regular MLAs.

My third main priority is healthy communities. This is a complex set of inter-related issues that includes homelessness and the need for better housing, early childhood development, affordable and accessible daycare, improved education including post-secondary opportunities, continued work on the Anti-Poverty Strategy, promotion of our official languages and cultures, expanded addiction prevention and treatment programs, stronger investment in our youth and seniors, and last, but certainly not least, building a more equitable society to ensure that women take their rightful place.

I met with many advocates on these issues during the campaign and attempted to answer many

questionnaires and surveys, like my fellow MLAs, and I want to continue to work on these issues.

My focus within this broad set of issues will be on children and housing. We should increase funding for early childhood development programs and services as we all want to get our children off on the right foot. This is simply one of the best investments we can make as a government with tremendous cost savings down the road. This necessary work on children also includes the universal child care system for which we already have a feasibility study. We can learn from other communities' successes on homelessness and affordable housing. The Housing First approach will lead to improved health and education outcomes. Without safe shelter, progress in other issues, it's difficult at best.

I look forward to working with all the other MLAs and Cabinet on this important suite of issues under the theme of healthy communities.

Now I would like to talk a little bit about how we work together. Change was certainly a major theme and outcome in the recent election campaign. We have started that change by separating the nomination and voting for the Premier, and I will be working towards more improvements in transparency and accountability. In retrospect, this round table where individual MLAs put forward their priorities as equals should have been done before the nomination process for Premier and Cabinet.

I want to pick up on some of the good work done by the last Frame Lake MLA, Ms. Wendy Bisaro, to legislate and implement an ombudsman for the Northwest Territories, and I look forward to support, and I have heard support, from other MLAs. The process whereby Cabinet will prepare a mandate in consultation with the Regular MLAs and have it passed in this House is a good one. To ensure good progress and performance, it is essential that there is a rigorous and public mid-term review of not just that mandate but of the Ministers themselves. I have a strong sense that we all have come prepared to do our homework and to do our best for the Northwest Territories. I look forward to serving on strong and potentially realigned committees that conduct as much of their business in public as possible.

A few closing remarks, if I may. I would like to thank the 17th Assembly for its work on transition and our staff and the public service for the helpful briefings over the last week and my fellow MLAs for listening to me today. I will listen to you carefully and look forward to the opportunities and challenges of working together.

Lastly, I wish to assure everyone that my own priorities and our collective priorities are subject to updating and change, based on new events and

what we hear. Even if an issue was not raised in this round table today, it doesn't mean that we're not going to work on it. But, at the end of the day, we cannot possibly do everything and we will have to make choices. We all come to this government with different backgrounds, education and experience. While I may be knowledgeable on resource management matters, I will be relying on other MLAs for their knowledge and wisdom on social issues, youth, and more. We should take advantage of this diversity to help us build a better Northwest Territories. Mr. Chair, that concludes my statement.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Next we have Mr. Glen Abernethy, the Member for Great Slave. Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Glen Abernethy's Speech

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Between October 26 and November 23, I knocked on 1,384 doors within the Great Slave riding. During these visits I asked many of the residents what they thought the priorities should be for the 18th Legislative Assembly. The priorities that were repeated the most often were the economy, youth, housing and cost of living.

With respect to the economy, the reality is the NWT faces significant economic challenges both today and into the future. Small businesses are struggling to survive in the Northwest Territories, and large, non-renewable resource extraction businesses are slow to start. These challenges are compounded by the fact that the NWT diamond mines, our largest economic contributors, are approaching the end of their lifecycles.

The majority of the people I talked to recognize that the GNWT must continue to pursue environmentally and socially responsible resource extraction opportunities within our territories as they are the most significant contributor to our territorial GDP. At the end of the day, there are no sectors that can bring this type of money and opportunity as the diamond mines and other mines.

Constituents have told me, and I agree, that we need to help restore confidence to potential investors that our Northwest Territories is in fact a good place to do business. To help improve confidence, constituents have told me that the GNWT must work with Aboriginal governments to move land claims and self-government negotiations forward throughout the Northwest Territories. Interim land withdrawals and decades of negotiations cause uncertainty to potential exploration companies and investors. Land claims and self-government negotiations are critical. In addition to recognizing that all people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, of the Northwest Territories can share lands, resources, power, and hope for the

future, while at the same time respecting our similarities and differences, completing these land claims and self-government negotiations will help restore confidence in the Northwest Territories as a place to invest and do business.

Further, the 18th Legislative Assembly must consider strategic infrastructure investments that can extend mine life and help reduce exploration costs for future mining interests; infrastructure such as roads into the North Slave Geological Province, Whati, and up the Mackenzie Valley. For any improvements in the mining sector to be successful, the GNWT and the 18th Legislative Assembly must work closely with the NWT Chamber of Mines to set measurable and meaningful priorities.

Non-renewable resource extraction was not the only economic priority identified by my constituents. Constituents told me that the GNWT must also focus on supporting a sustainable and diversified economy. I agree with many of the ideas that you'll hear today and that we heard out in the public, ideas such as investing in green energy, farming, fishing, forestry, biomass production, tourism, culture, arts and film.

The GNWT must do more to enhance all of these areas. They allow residents to circulate money coming in from sources like mining throughout the Northwest Territories, rather than leaving directly for the south. These economic opportunities may not be huge revenue generators by themselves, but they do help improve the quality of life, cost of living, and can support sustainability through the peaks and valleys of non-renewable resource extraction. They are incentive for people to stay, enjoy and become part of all of our communities.

For any of these initiatives to be successful, the GNWT must work closely with small business owners and operators and find a way to enhance the support for entrepreneurs here in the Northwest Territories. In addition, the GNWT needs to work closely with the chambers of commerce throughout the Northwest Territories, to create real opportunity and sustainability for northern business.

As I've already indicated, supporting and improving our economic opportunities in the Northwest Territories will require some strategic infrastructure investment. As a Legislative Assembly, we must be open to taking some risk and utilizing some of our short-term borrowing capacity while the borrowing costs are low, to support economic development and create future opportunities, revenue generation and cost controls.

Another priority area raised by the constituents was our youth. Constituents were clear that to maximize benefits of economic development and activity, we have to support a robust education system that provides options to meet the needs of learners of all

ages. This will ensure that Northerners can take advantage of opportunities that are available to them. Unfortunately, our graduation rates remain lower than the rest of Canada. This is especially true in our smaller and remote communities. We constantly hear that when our young people do graduate in our smaller communities that they don't have the academic credentials to get into colleges or universities. Together, all together, we must stop this trend, we must turn it around, and it must start before kindergarten.

I've heard from constituents that the GNWT needs to do more to support early childhood development throughout the Northwest Territories. It must build upon the work started in the 17th Legislative Assembly, but must continue to do more with an enhanced focus on zero to three and the support to daycare providers and parents.

Free play-based education for four-year-old children was another hot topic. Everyone agrees that it must be a priority, but there was also clear indication that one model does not fit all in all situations. The daycare providers, Aboriginal Head Start and parents must be included in the development of programs and identification of alternative solutions in this area. Education Renewal has support; however, I heard that it needs to move quicker and that it must be done in a collaborative way. To be successful in this initiative, the GNWT must engage and work with parents, school boards and other stakeholders to improve the education system in the Northwest Territories, and this is pre-kindergarten to Grade 12.

It was also clear that constituents want more done to support youth who are struggling with mental illness. Helping youth with mental health early and helping them transition out of the school into adulthood, rather than stopping the support at graduation as we often do now, will help these individuals lead healthier and more productive lives. The GNWT must develop and adequately resource a youth mental health strategy.

With respect to post-secondary studies, I've heard that more options must be available to our residents at a territorial, regional and community level. There are a large number of young people 18 to 24 who don't consider themselves part of the workforce. They aren't looking for work and don't believe that there are opportunities for them should they decide to work. Our existing models for post-secondary studies or technical training doesn't seem to be engaging these individuals. The GNWT must be open to creative alternatives that can provide training and education where people are, in their communities and regions.

The third most common area raised by constituents was homelessness and cost of living. Homelessness continues to be a significant

problem in the Northwest Territories. There are a number of initiatives that are currently underway, and unfortunately, and too often, the different groups are working in isolation from each other with the same goal in mind. This seems like a wasted effort and a challenge to success. The GNWT must engage all of the stakeholders, municipalities, Aboriginal governments, industry, in order to support the delivery of collaborative and meaningful Homeless First programming throughout the Northwest Territories.

Constituents also told me that the GNWT must consider a mental health transition facility based on the Home First model, likely in Yellowknife as a starting point. This facility could provide a safe place for individuals suffering from mental illness or addictions to live, where they can receive outpatient programs – things like addictions, trauma and/or mental health counselling, to name just a few – as they transition through their illness into a more stable and healthy life. Nunavut recently opened a facility based on this model in Iqaluit. They have already seen significant success and a direct impact on reducing some of their challenges with respect to homelessness in their community.

There are a number of high quality housing programs being offered by the GNWT through the NWT Housing Corporation to help our residents get into homes. Unfortunately, during the election I heard that people either don't understand the programs that exist, aren't aware that they exist, or that they aren't flexible enough to recognize the realities that many of our individuals are facing. Through the NWT Housing Corp, we must engage stakeholders and users of the programs at a community level to seek ways to improve communication and delivery of housing programs. There are answers, Mr. Clerk, in the communities, and as a government we must listen.

With respect to the cost of living, all residents have a personal responsibility to live within their means. Just like the GNWT, residents must spend responsibly and not take on unmanageable debt or spend beyond their individual earning capacity. Unfortunately, many individuals who are managing their individual finances responsibly have indicated that they are struggling to make ends meet. The GNWT can't do everything to address an individual's cost of living, but there are ways the GNWT can help residents. These include controlling costs of power through investment in infrastructure, solar, wind, biomass, et cetera. We need to avoid extreme price fluctuations resulting from uncontrollable challenges like low water levels here in the North Slave.

Working with stakeholders to increase daycare options and affordability for NWT residents. Universal daycare may not be affordable in the

immediate term, but more can definitely be done to support families in this area. We need to have a long-term plan moving us towards universal daycare, while at the same time, we need to identify and implement some short-term strategies that fit GNWT's fiscal reality.

Enhancing and streamlining rebate programs to install wood stoves, more efficient furnaces, solar panels, better insulation for commercial and residential users, increasing the number of long-term care beds available to seniors throughout the Northwest Territories, working with the federal government to ensure they live up to their commitment to update the northern residents tax deduction, working with the federal government to help improve the Nutrition North Program for our isolated communities here in the Northwest Territories, enhancing support for community gardens and other food production opportunities. There are definitely some actions the GNWT can take to help residents control the cost of living in the Northwest Territories.

In addition to the three priority areas I have described, another theme appeared. During many discussions with constituents, they described programs and services that they believed should exist within the Government of the Northwest Territories. In many cases these programs or services they described already exist. This suggests, at least to me, that the GNWT is not particularly good at getting program information to the clients who need the support or will benefit from the programs. This is both unfortunate and unacceptable. The GNWT must review its communication protocols and work closely with end users of the GNWT programs to ensure that potential clients get the program information they need when they need it.

There are a couple areas that I want to mention before my time is up. They didn't come up at the doors, but they are issues that I believe the 18th Legislative Assembly must address. First, the TRC recommendations. As a government, we must take these recommendations seriously and commit to addressing them as a priority of the 18th Legislative Assembly, both indirectly and directly. Supporting the recommendations from the TRC will help positively impact the priority areas that I have described today, the economy, youth, homelessness and cost of living.

Second, community funding. NWT community governments are struggling to survive an annual funding shortfall of almost \$40 million per year for operating costs, infrastructure, water and sewage. The GNWT must make addressing this shortfall a priority moving forward. It will require hard choices, but a way forward must be found.

Third, climate change. This one I was honestly surprised that it didn't come up at more doors. Weird. However, yesterday at COP21 an agreement was made and Canada is a signatory. Some of the highlights of that deal are signatories must peak greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and achieve a balance between sources and sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century. Signatories must work to keep global temperatures increase well below two degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Our Prime Minister has indicated that he will work with the provinces and territories to implement actions to help Canada meet these targets. The GNWT will be required and expected to do its part to help Canada meet these targets. I know many of the residents of the Northwest Territories expect us to do just that.

Mr. Clerk, these are just some of the priorities I've heard from my constituents over the last couple of months. There's no question that the next Legislative Assembly faces a number of important challenges, a tight fiscal outlook for the GNWT, limited economic activity and an increasing cost of living. By engaging our stakeholders and working together here in this room and down the halls, I'm confident that we can make progress in all of these areas. Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Next, Mr. R.J. Simpson, the Member for Hay River North.

Mr. R.J. Simpson's Speech

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am honoured to have the opportunity today to speak to the Assembly and to the people of the Northwest Territories. I look forward to hearing from all of the Members and working with them as we set the priorities of the 18th Assembly.

When considering our priorities, I look to the future. As the recent Snap Lake announcement has reminded us, the diamond mines will not be here forever. We must take steps now to foster an economy that will be able to provide for our children, our grandchildren and generations beyond. This includes investments in infrastructure, supporting small businesses and emerging industries, encouraging responsible resource exploration and creating a business climate that is attractive to investors.

An essential component to a successful economy is a skilled workforce. We need to do a better job of educating, training and retaining Northerners and attracting skilled workers from other jurisdictions.

While looking to the future, we must not neglect the pressing issues of today. The cost of living affects every one of us on a daily basis and is an

impediment to attracting investors and retaining residents. Housing is a concern in every region of the territory. Whether it is a lack of housing units for seniors or chronic homelessness, it is an area that demands our attention.

We must also continue to work on improving mental health and addiction services. We cannot be a prosperous society unless we are a healthy society. Doing a better job of protecting and supporting the victimized, marginalized and vulnerable among us must also be at the forefront of our priority-setting discussion.

My discussion of some very important issues will be brief, and because of time constraints, there is so much I will not mention at all. However, after getting to know the Members of the 18th Assembly over the past few weeks and learning about their varying strengths and backgrounds, I am confident that all of the important issues will be well represented and we can create a set of priorities that are in the best interests of the current and future citizens of the Northwest Territories.

The territory is facing tough economic times. The diamond mines, the main drivers of our economy, are all scheduled to close in the next 15 years, and there are as of yet no projects to replace them. This situation necessitates two responses: We must create a climate that encourages investment and resource exploration, and we must diversify our economy so that we are more resilient against global factors that affect commodity prices.

Despite declining revenues, this government needs to invest in projects that lower the cost of doing business in the Northwest Territories. The resource sector is cyclical, so even though we are on a downturn now, we must position ourselves for the future. This includes investment in projects such as the Slave Geological Province and the development of a regulatory regime that encourages exploration and attracts investment.

In addition to lowering business costs, projects like the Mackenzie Valley Highway will reduce the costs of goods in communities and open up a vast part of the territory for tourism. We must also partner with industry and the federal government to pursue dredging around Hay River and up the Mackenzie, to lower the cost and decrease the liability of shipping.

In addition to large-scale investments, communities must be provided with the funding they need to ensure that they can provide, improve and maintain their infrastructure. We have to develop a funding formula for communities that is fair and based on needs.

To help insulate ourselves from global factors that are out of our control, we need to focus efforts on developing and growing local industries. Stable

economies are built from the ground up. We need to support entrepreneurs and northern companies that have already made investments in our communities. We should be supporting entrepreneurs with increased and more flexible seed funding and a stronger Business Incentive Program.

The new pellet plant scheduled to open in Enterprise is proof that there is opportunity for new industries. Manufacturing has grown 26 percent annually between 2009 and 2014. This sector not only creates jobs, it builds capacity by creating opportunities for apprenticeships. Farming and agriculture are other emerging industries that we need to foster, both because of their growth potential and because of the food security they provide to the North. Likewise for commercial fishing.

In addition to the ample North American market, cargo flights from Edmonton to China mean that we can now provide fresh fish to the Chinese market. We have made investments in these areas and we need to continue to do so.

We must also continue efforts to decentralize government jobs from Yellowknife to regional centres and communities. While our economy can't be built on government jobs alone, they can provide much needed employment outside Yellowknife and bring money into the communities.

Priority must also be given to improving the GNWT's relationship with Aboriginal governments, settling outstanding claims and implementing settled claims. As we heard at the Northern Leaders' Meeting this weekend, we have to do a better job in all of these areas. While respect and fair dealing are reasons enough to do this, improvement in these areas will also create a more attractive business environment by providing clarity to companies who wish to invest in the North.

All the talk about building an economy is meaningless if we do not have an educated and skilled workforce to maintain it. Earlier I spoke of investing in infrastructure and entrepreneurs. Nothing provides a better return on investment than education. We need to put more teachers in the classroom, especially in earlier grades. The NWT had one of the worst student/teacher ratios in the country, and we are setting ourselves up for failure unless we do something about it. Our graduation rate is low, and many of those who do graduate lack the skills needed to succeed in university. It's not fair to them and it's a missed opportunity for all of us.

We must also do a better job of retaining those students who do go south and receive a university education. We need to communicate with them while they're in school, create opportunities for

them in the North, such as summer positions and internships, and offer a more generous loan forgiveness regime. We are concerned with attracting new residents to the North, but we should not forget about the ones who already have roots here.

There also needs to be a renewed focus on apprenticeships. SNAP is a program that gives high school students a head start on getting a trade. It's a solid program but we need to make better use of it. When a journeyman takes on an apprentice, he or she is doing a service for the entire territory. We need to support and encourage that with better incentives and programs. We must also work to make schooling more accessible for apprentices both in terms of when and where it is offered. If we are truly concerned about the future of the Northwest Territories, we must make education a top priority.

During the campaign I heard a lot of concerns about the state of the economy. I heard equally as many concerns about the availability of safe and affordable housing. From speaking with the other Members, I know that these concerns are common in every region.

The lack of seniors housing is becoming an increasingly urgent problem because of our aging population. We need to look at ways to keep seniors in their homes longer, such as greater investments in home care, and increasing the number of people who qualify for the Seniors Home Heating Subsidy.

In some communities there are just not enough houses, period. The result is that some people find themselves homeless. With the wealth we have in this territory, I find that unacceptable. Ensuring that everyone has access to safe, affordable housing should be a priority of the next Assembly.

There are many important issues which I haven't touched on, including, but not limited to, social issues that badly need our attention. I know some of my colleagues will touch on these, and I look forward to working with them to ensure that those issues are also made a priority of this Assembly.

We face many challenges over the next year and we have tough decisions to make; however, given the talent and skills of the people of the Northwest Territories and my fellow Members, I am optimistic, hopeful and excited about what the future holds. Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next we have Mr. Wally Schumann, the Member for Hay River South. Mr. Schumann.

Mr. Wally Schumann's Speech

MR. SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. On election day, residents of the Northwest Territories

spoke loud and clear. It's time for change. It's time to create a brighter future for all NWT residents, and I want to congratulate everyone here.

We have all been entrusted with a huge responsibility. Creating meaningful progress in the Northwest Territories isn't going to be easy. The days of the status quo are over. It's going to take courage, collaboration, innovation. The priorities we put forward here today are critical first steps in that direction. Let's be honest; our families, businesses and communities are struggling to get ahead, and for most it's not getting any better. It's something I've seen and heard not just in my community but across the territory. The time has come to ensure our communities and its residents can get back on the road to prosperity. The priorities I bring here today will help us reach this goal.

It's no surprise that some of our biggest challenges are the result of the economic downturn. It's something that has been raised in the recommendations of the 17th Legislative Assembly and it's something that will be critical to address the mandate of the 18th Assembly. Frankly, our economic outlook is grim. The closing dates of several mines are rapidly approaching and there are no new resource development projects lined up. It's time to get the Northwest Territories back in business. There are a lot of low-hanging fruits that could give our economy the boost it desperately needs. We need to help support our small and local business prosper with investment and growth opportunities.

Tourism provides an excellent opportunity for our territory. The more visitors to the NWT, the more money is spent here and the more attractive it is for investors. At the same time, we can encourage even more outside investment by getting some big obstacles out of the way.

Completing land claims will free up land for development and provide future certainty for business and investment. There are also regulatory processes related to land use that need to be revisited and streamlined. This will facilitate and expedite growth. By supporting our businesses and removing obstacles to outside investment, we're not only jump starting our economy, we're also creating new jobs, new training opportunities for NWT residents.

I don't need to tell anyone in this room that our high cost of living hurts every single person and business in the Northwest Territories. Every day it contributes to the economic downturn we are experiencing. It's time for us to realize that band-aid fixes simply do not work. We need to invest in long-term solutions.

One of the most important things we can do is address the high cost of energy. Alternative energy

sources such as solar, biomass and wind may be part of the solution and they should be investigated, but we need to think long term.

We also have to look at immediate ways to help keep more hard-earned dollars in the pockets of our residents. Refunding the 2 percent payroll tax to every employee is one way we can do this. Addressing food security, which is one of the most vital issues facing our communities, is absolutely critical. Creating an all-season Mackenzie Highway would be a big step in that direction. This road would help ensure our communities have a reliable and affordable access to food and essential supplies. It would also benefit local businesses and open up even more opportunities for resource development. Again, we need more than band-aid solutions to lower the cost of living. The solutions we need to find to help not just the residents of the NWT today but their children and their grandchildren.

One of the hard realities of both economic downturn and high cost of living is their impact on health and social programs available to our residents. When our businesses are hurting, so are our families, our seniors, our youth and our most vulnerable. Our most important services are constantly being challenged to do more with less money. In my opinion, that simply doesn't make sense. We need to look at the health and social programs in place to see what's working and what's not. How can we better invest our dollars to get the biggest bang for our buck, the only feasible way we can increase support for programs that have real impact on the health and well-being of our residents and free up cash to address the gaps.

The need for a drug and alcohol treatment facility within the Northwest Territories, for instance, would require this type of approach. We need to examine the current system, find out why previous ones have failed, and decide what is the best way to move forward that will have the best health outcome for lasting rehabilitation. After all, a healthy workforce is an attractive workforce for investment.

We also need to ensure our programs are relevant. Seniors are one of the fastest growing segments to our population and some of the biggest clients of our health and social programs. Having a seniors advocate would help ensure we are appropriately addressing not only their needs but those of the families who assist their care. By taking a hard look at our health and social service programs to see what's working and what's not and whether they are relevant, we can start to make better use of their limited dollars to improve the health and well-being of all residents of the Northwest Territories.

Finally, one of the most important priorities we need to address is education. Education is an investment in the future that will pay out dividends. It affects

our economy; it affects the health of our communities; and it affects the future of the Northwest Territories. Our youth will be taking the reins of our communities and we need to set them up for success. We need to improve the attendance, graduation rates and academic success levels to better prepare our youth for post-secondary education and careers. At the same time, we need to respect and support our diverse cultural needs and promote education in all our official languages.

We also need to increase support for inclusive classrooms, to make sure every single student in the Northwest Territories gets the best education possible. But we can't just invest in the Foundations for Success. We need to follow through with those investments by promoting apprenticeships, career training, internship and opportunities within our communities. By giving our future leaders the best possible education and training that include cultural and language diversity, we're creating a valuable workforce who will be inspired to grow their careers and families right here in the Northwest Territories.

There's been a lot of talk about transparency here in the last few weeks, and I think this is very important. As MLAs, we have been held more accountable to what our residents have voted for. But we need to take this a step further. The key to addressing all our priorities in a quick and effective manner will be collaboration. Every single one of us needs to find a way to better collaborate with federal, municipal and Aboriginal governments, organizations and stakeholders within our communities. By doing this, we can work faster and smarter to build a more robust economy, to find sustainable solutions that lower the cost of living, to improve the health and social services of all communities and give the best possible education to every single student in the Northwest Territories. Collaboration in these priorities is the only way we can address the urgent need to get the Northwest Territories and all the residents back on the road to prosperity. Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Schumann. Next I have Mr. Alfred Moses, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Inuvik Boot Lake.

Mr. Alfred Moses' Speech

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Clerk, and thank you, colleagues. I just want to make note that it's great listening to all the optimism, the energy in this 18th Assembly and the work that everyone is looking at focusing on. Being through, I guess you could say, the wringer for one term already, and really understanding some of the realities that we're facing in this government moving forward and some of the challenges that we have, that we're still

looking to do the best for the people who put us in this seat. Throughout the campaign I heard a lot of really meaningful concerns, some that were strictly related to Inuvik, to the region, and then some that were territorially needed to be pushed. I just want to highlight a few and then I'll get into more details around legislation, around strategies and action plans that have been done and that are made public; accountability and how do we move on that – we've heard some of that here today already – the environment; the economy; health and well-being; as well as education.

Some of the things that I did here when I was going door to door and having some of my meetings and meet-and-greets in Inuvik were the high costs of living, and you've heard that already on numerous occasions. Heating and electricity costs, there's a big disparity between the rural and remote communities and what we see down in southern parts of the Northwest Territories. I had some really good discussions with some of our leaders up in the Beaufort-Delta region. How do we address that for all Northerners? Child care was a big one. Support for small business. Homelessness and housing. We do also have some collective bargaining agreements coming up this term, that's going to be a priority for our public workforce, and also jobs was a big one, and education, and more specifically, how do we use some of our facilities that we have in Inuvik right now, such as the Aurora College facility, and get that more up and used?

In the 17th Legislative Assembly, when we went through our discussions and went through our orientations, like we did over the last couple of weeks here, what was a big note for me, and has always stayed as a priority for me, was mental health and addictions. It's the biggest cost-driver for this government. If we want to reduce costs and put more money into other programs and services that we've heard here today, we've got to tackle the mental health issues and the addictions that we see in the Northwest Territories. It has always been a big priority for me, and in the 17th Legislative Assembly with the Mental Health Act, and you've heard it here today, as well as the child and youth mental health strategy that we need to develop in this government. We're the only jurisdiction in Canada that doesn't have one, and I think that's going to be a big priority not only on the health system but also in the education system, so that they, the teachers and the families, have the supports in place so that each child has the right to get education, and I think that is hopefully one of our big priorities moving into the 18th.

Moving a little bit further in terms of legislation, a lot of good work was done in the 17th Legislative Assembly and I hope it will continue with the strong momentum and energy that we see here with the new Members and with the experience and

knowledge that is coming with Members returning from the 17th.

The Mental Health Act was a big one. Child and Family Services Act needed supports and I think that is another one that needs to be opened up again and looked at. Not during the campaign trail but ongoing during the consultations with the Child and Family Services Act, kinship care came up many times, and that is something that is missing in the Child and Family Services Act. We have to support the grandparents. We have to support the families that are taking care of their family's children. It is a big hardship on our small communities and I think that needs to be addressed. If that means opening up the Child and Family Services Act again to get it amended so that we have kinship care in there, it is going to make a lot of families a lot healthier.

A big one, which I have also mentioned, is the Hospital Insurance Health and Social Services Administration Act, the governance act. We are putting all the health authorities into the one territorial health and social services authority that will better give services to all residents of the Northwest Territories and will cut down on some of the duplicated costs of ordering supplies as well as competing for doctors, competing for nurses. I think it is going to make a big stride moving forward. Also, just the other ones like the Health Information Act and the Pharmacy Act, which is going to have a big impact on people's lives when we start monitoring some of the pharmaceuticals that we are giving to some of our residents.

Moving forward into some of the other areas like the strategies and action plans that we need to continue to support to have an impact and have an effect on a lot of concerns that were mentioned here today by some of our other Members, the Economic Opportunities Strategy, creating jobs, helping small businesses, Oil and Gas Strategy. Even though we are in a downturn with the oil and gas, we can't let Canada, we can't let the world know that we are not still interested in resource extraction and resource development in the regions that do have the resources.

Leading up into that, it goes right into the Transportation Strategy. We are seeing the benefits up in Inuvik with the Inuvik-Tuk Highway and we want to see those benefits in the Sahtu; we want to see those benefits in the Deh Cho; we want to see those benefits here in Yellowknife and in the Tlicho region to make sure that they get the benefits of jobs and creating those highways to reduce the cost of living, but also creating jobs for people in the Northwest Territories.

Another one is the Anti-Poverty Strategy. A lot of work went into that. Collaborative work went into that, I must say, with NGOs, with municipal

governments, between departments, Education, Health, Justice, all working together to try to make the territory with focus on our people. We always said in the last government, healthy, educated people free from poverty, and I think that is what we have to continue to focus on.

Early childhood development was big, as mentioned over the weekend as well. There was a document that was tabled on June 4th, Universal Affordable Child Daycare. That needs to be something we need to address within our government, because what that is going to do is get families being able to be double-income families where child care will be affordable so both people in the house can go do work, have double income and help with the reduced costs of living.

We heard education as a priority. I heard it in the community of Inuvik. With the Education Renewal and Innovation Strategy coming out, I think we need to continue to support that, so that we do support not only our students but our teachers and those in the workforce.

I have always said that our greatest resource in the Northwest Territories is our people. Once we put that effort into making them healthy and educated, it will pay tenfold in terms of having them ready to do the jobs when the economy picks back up, but it will also cut down on health care costs and hopefully cut down on some of the costs we see with income assistance and in housing.

I mentioned earlier about the Transportation Strategy. One thing that I think this next government should do is have a better monitoring system for the Business Incentive Policy. Every year we get a report that says contracts over \$5,000, and how many of them were negotiated, how many of them came back for change orders, and we're talking millions of millions of dollars.

We're not the only place in Canada that's having an effect with the economy. All jurisdictions across Canada are looking for jobs and they're looking in other places and looking into the North, and when they come to work in the North, they don't know the cost of doing business in the North. As a result, they underbid the people who really know how to do the job; and when they underbid, then they get change orders which come back and effect the government. So, we need a better monitoring system to support our local businesses and have a good understanding of what it costs to do business in the Northwest Territories.

There are many other strategies that I can continue to mention, the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan that we need to continue to follow. One plan, however, that was not done in the 17th but I feel that it needs to be brought forward in the 18th Assembly is the Energy Plan. Two energy charrettes in the

last government, no plan came out of them. Recommendations that came out of them were not addressed. One recommendation that came out of that is the NWT energy efficient act. Still no work has been done on it to date, and I think early on in the 18th that is something that we need to address and we really need to focus.

Also, we're going through a low economic downturn in oil and gas. We've heard today about the diamond mines and their closing. We've got to look at where else we can focus, the traditional economy, Tourism Strategy, Film Strategy, arts, a biomass strategy, other areas that we can put our efforts in that will give us a good return moving forward. Caribou management is a big one, as well, as a priority moving forward.

I'm not going to get through everything that I want to say here today.

I'll talk a little bit about accountability. Every year we get the Auditor General reports. They need to continue to be a priority of this government. That is going to make us do our jobs a lot better and more efficiently moving forward. The public accounts practice that was started in the 17th Legislative Assembly really needs to continue, because that's keeping our government accountable, keeping people who we work with – organizations, health authorities, education authorities, Aurora College – accountable with how they spend the dollars that we provide to them and making sure that it's being spent in the best possible way, as well as those reports that are coming from departments. The Housing First initiative was another big one that I think is doing really well here in Yellowknife, but you look at some of the regional centres, Inuvik, Hay River, even the small communities, the couch surfers, they really need a Housing First initiative to the communities that will address some of the overcrowding which leads to some of our health and wellness issues.

You heard it earlier here today, and I too want to give recognition to Ms. Bisaro who did a lot of work, and she did table a document on the ombudsman in the last government. I think we have to resurrect that document and look at it. That will give us an independent review of the programs and services that we have in this government.

Land and resource management is also a big one. You've heard it also here today with looking at land claims, looking at self-government, how we need to have a better Aboriginal engagement practice and not a strategy. All these strategies and action plans that I'm talking about, they can't just be strategies. They've got to be action plans and we've got to put action to what we're saying and not just putting them in documents or in words.

On top of that, settling these land claims and self-government. We've got to have a better federal engagement strategy. The last government did a great job, and I think this year having our MP in the government is going to give us a lot of leverage and a lot of momentum to get things done here in the Northwest Territories.

You heard people mention this earlier, but earlier this year we passed a \$1.6 billion operations budget for 44,000 people here in the Northwest Territories. This government can't sustain that. We've got to have a balance of both doing the work, providing the programs and also balancing getting the resources out of the ground and shipped to markets. One concern, and I know it's going to be a priority and it was an election issue, was the horizontal hydraulic fracturing. With devolution, we have taken over a lot of those decision-making powers and I think we need to continue moving to create some type of strong regulations so that if that practice goes through, we're protecting the environment, we're protecting the people, but we're getting revenues to offset some of these high costs for our operations and continue with projects that we currently have: the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link; the Inuvik-Tuk Highway, complete that project; and then start working on the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Like I said, we want to create jobs in all the regions for people in the Northwest Territories.

One other thing that was done in the 17th that I think we need to continue moving forward is the Midwifery Program here in Yellowknife, and also do a better job in terms of chronic disease management such as cancer and diabetes. A Cancer Strategy, a Cancer Action Plan was tabled just in the last government. I think we need to bring that up because we are seeing high rates of cancer in some of the communities.

Personally, another one that I brought forth in the last government that I'd like to see some work on is the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee. We had an unfortunate incident up in our region, and I think something brought forth like this where we get independent bodies that work closely in this relationship, giving us recommendations on what we need to do, will move forward in creating healthier communities and healthier relationships and healthier families.

As I mentioned, I didn't get to everything that I wanted to talk about, but I like the energy in the room. I like the educated, well-thought-out priorities of every Member, and I look forward to working in the 18th the next four years with everybody, moving some of these action items forward, addressing the health care costs, education. With that, thank you, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Moses, and thank you for not requiring me to tell you that your time for priority statements has expired. Next I have Mr. Robert C. McLeod, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Robert McLeod's Speech

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to the opportunity to be part of the 18th Legislative Assembly. With the balance of returning Members and a lot of the energy that the new Members bring, I think we're well set up, well positioned to tackle some of the priorities in the 18th Assembly that we're setting today.

I've made a list of the four or five priorities that I would see, and I believe they're all connected somehow. One of the big priorities I believe is the completion of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. This has a trickle-down effect. It will create some jobs and training opportunities for a lot of our young people. It will help address the high cost of living up and down the valley. It will connect all of the NWT. It will increase tourism. There will be a lot of training opportunities that I've stated for youth.

We've seen some of the benefits of work like this that goes on with the construction of the Inuvik-Tuk Highway, and some of the numbers we got back, I think... I believe our income support numbers were down because people were working. Our rental revenue for housing was up because people were working. People want to work; we just have to give them the opportunity to work.

One of the other priorities I see is we need to work to settle the land claims. It does give certainty on the ownership of land. It gives certainty to potential investors, and we need to tap into that and move forward with that.

We have a great opportunity here to work with the new federal government. I listened closely to a lot of the campaign, I wouldn't call them promises, but a lot of the campaign material that they had. They had talked about huge infrastructure investment, and we have to make sure that we're in a position to receive some of that money because we do need it up here, and I think they'll recognize that. The fact that we have a sitting MP that's part of the government body I think would work in our favour. We need to tap into that and utilize that.

The declining CMHC funding, there's a common theme I've heard so far about the houses and housing and the lack of housing. One of the challenges that we've faced in the last number of years was the declining CMHC funding. Again, here's an opportunity to have dialogue with the federal government and see if there's a way that they recognize our unique situation in all three territories and the challenges that we face providing

housing. If they were to put a freeze on the declining CMHC funding, then we might be in a position where we can add new public housing units. Because it's a lot of the Members that are coming back and if you've listened to the proceedings in the House, you'll notice we talk a lot about replacement public housing units, and that's because the challenge we face with the declining CMHC funding. We've been very fortunate in the last, I think in the life of the 17th Assembly. I believe there was \$6 million that this government put towards the provision of housing across the Northwest Territories to help offset some of the money that we were losing with the declining CMHC funding. Again, here's an opportunity to work with a new federal government that seems to have a new attitude, and we're looking forward to that opportunity.

Municipal funding. We heard it this weekend, and we did the formula funding review at the end of the last Assembly because we wanted to be sure that we were in a position to seek any additional funds if the opportunity was available. We heard this weekend that they feel that they need \$40 million to address their community needs, and we recognize that, and we will have to identify that funding and work to get that funding to pass it on to the communities. Again, there is a trickle-down effect, because if communities get more funding, then they may be able to pass that on to their residents in their community by making some jobs available and improving the infrastructure they have there. We have been very fortunate in the last few years through the investments and federal government that we were able to pass some of the infrastructure money on to the communities, but we hear from the communities that that's just not quite enough, and they're challenged to maintain a lot of the infrastructure that they're receiving. So, we need to work with them to try and find ways that we can address the funding needs.

Finally, Mr. Chair, our most valuable resources – and it's been stated before – across the Northwest Territories are our youth and our seniors and the people of the Northwest Territories. With the seniors, we heard about the concerns with the senior housing. Again, that can go back to the declining CMHC funding, and if they were to put a freeze on that funding, then we may be able to invest more into the provision of funding for seniors to keep them in their own homes. So, all the priorities that I've listed I believe are all connected.

Our youth. Having worked with our youth for the last number of years and interacting with them, I'm really positive about the future of the NWT. We're developing a lot of really good leaders amongst the youth, and I believe in a few years there'll be 19 of them sitting in here and looking after the needs of the Northwest Territories.

So, Mr. Chair, I didn't take up very much time, but I do want to close by quoting a couple of lines from our Members' conduct guidelines, and we need to take these to heart. I believe we're going to sign these and they are going to be tabled so the public can have access to them. The one line I'd like to quote is: "To the public, I owe responsibility to work for the well-being of all residents of the Northwest Territories; and to my colleagues, I owe fairness and respect for our differences and the duty to work together for the good will of the common good." Mr. Chair, in this case the common good are the people of the Northwest Territories and the Northwest Territories itself. So, I thank you very much.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I think we'll try and do one more and then we'll take a break. Thank you, Mr. McLeod. We'll do one more, and I'll call upon Mr. Kieron Testart, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Kam Lake. Mr. Testart.

Mr. Kieron Testart's Speech

MR. TESTART: Mr. Chair, today I speak on behalf of my constituents who elected me to bring their concerns to our next government. These priorities, along with those from across the Northwest Territories, will shape the direction of the 18th Assembly.

The mandate I have received is based on the commitments I have made to the people of Kam Lake and to Northerners everywhere. The result of this historic election was motivated by a strong desire for change from the people whom we serve. This change was not for different government but, rather, for a better government that puts the needs of Northerners first and remains accountable to the public. No matter what priorities are decided upon by this Assembly, improvements to our consensus government must be made, and we must all endeavour to ensure that our doors remain open and Northerners have a clear understanding of how and why decisions are made. Our highest priority must be a functional and effective government whose Members work together in trust for the betterment of our society. We've already taken the first steps towards greater transparency in our leadership and priority-setting processes, and I'm encouraged by the strong level of engagement I've seen taking place in our democracy as Northerners raise their voices to be heard.

Mr. Chair, what I heard during this election and in the many months that preceded it, was that Northerners are struggling with the high cost of living, limited opportunities for employment and education, the dramatic changes to our environment caused by climate change, and a lack of progress towards indigenous self-government and finalizing modern treaties. I understand those concerns very well, as until only very recently I

experienced them firsthand as a northern resident unhappy with the efforts of our government to bring meaningful solutions to these issues.

I sought to represent the people of Kam Lake so that I could make a difference. I developed a detailed plan so that I could take action right away. Implementing that plan starts today as I work with other Members of the 18th Assembly to develop a common set of priorities that are shared by all Northerners. It is time to make tackling our high cost of living in the Northwest Territories a critical priority for our next government. Costs of living represent the single greatest barrier to increasing our population, expanding northern businesses and, most importantly, putting more money into the pockets of hardworking Northerners and their families.

Targeted infrastructure investment is needed in housing, transportation systems, energy production and transmission, and in municipal infrastructure. These investments will create jobs and growth, while making our communities more affordable. Northerners care about a healthy natural environment and want to ensure its protection while still recognizing the need for still more affordable power. Our government has an opportunity to realize new investments in clean energy generation that will satisfy both of these needs and the goal of a sustainable energy future for the Northwest Territories.

While the government's fiscal outlook is poor, we cannot afford to stand idle as our economy slips into further decline. We must be ready to spend our resources wisely to provide stimulus and get our economy back on track. Now is not the time for restraint when jobs are being lost to the South and our cost of living is high. Waiting until commodity prices rebound is not a sound economic strategy. We need to invest in our economy today by expanding the private sector and supporting non-renewable resource exploration. We must also learn from this experience and invest in a stronger Heritage Fund that keeps our economy ahead of the boom and bust cycle of commodity markets.

Northern-owned and -operated businesses form the backbone of our economy. Real economic growth must be measured in private sector growth and not public sector spending. Our government has an obligation to support hardworking northern entrepreneurs with expanded programs, lower taxes, and policies that make sense and allow businesses to grow. Creating a positive environment for resource sector development must also be a priority by working in partnership with all levels of government to create and promote a regulatory system that protects our environment and is a benefit to exploration, not a deterrent.

Our government's relationship with indigenous peoples is a key to this effort and begins by affirming that the starting point for all future negotiations and interactions is in a nation-to-nation relationship that starts on the basis of rights, rather than on government policy. Indigenous peoples have used the land since time immemorial and must be considered full partners in building a prosperous and healthy future for the Northwest Territories.

Our government must also embrace reconciliation as a guiding principle and commit to implementing all the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations. Only by settling outstanding claims and negotiating modern treaties can certainty be established and the benefits of resource extraction be enjoyed by all Northerners.

There must also be a focus to realize real opportunities for education and wellness in our communities. Northerners are rightfully concerned by the high rates of addictions and mental health issues affecting their communities. Our government has an obligation to act and create local residential treatment programs and facilities that Northerners can access from home. Many of those who seek treatment are unwilling or unable to leave their homes for southern treatment facilities, and those who do, often return home lacking supports to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Our government must consider this need for local treatment options and take action with a plan that builds local capacity for wellness in our communities.

Homelessness continues to challenge the resources of our communities. Little coordinated effort has taken place to create a meaningful solution. Our government can and must do better to address homelessness and work in partnership with all levels of government to develop an effective territorial housing strategy that addresses the needs for all our communities equally.

Early childhood education, culturally appropriate schooling and education renewal must continue to be priorities. Apprenticeship programs must be expanded and enhanced, and post-secondary education opportunities cannot be ignored any longer. Northerners must be given enhanced opportunities for higher learning here in the Northwest Territories.

Aurora College represents an unrealized opportunity to support our labour market and the aspirations of our people as they seek opportunities for training and career development. Our government must be responsive to the needs of greater post-secondary education that allows Northerners to stay and learn here in the Northwest Territories. We need a new plan for Aurora College along with recognizing northern academic institutions such as Dechinta University and College

Nordique and providing them with appropriate levels of funding.

The most important resource of the Northwest Territories is our people. Our diversity is the source of our strength and is the heart of a rich culture that is unique in Canada and the world. Our government must work to protect and promote our culture with a new emphasis on the arts and programs that preserve indigenous languages and traditional knowledge. This will enrich our communities and expand on tourism opportunities for visitors to our home. Tourism continues to grow, and showcasing our unique northern heritage will further our role as a world-class destination for those seeking a distinctly northern experience.

I'm humbled by the trust that my constituents have placed in me to be their voice in this esteemed House. It is a profound privilege and honour to represent the people of Kam Lake. I will work to ensure their needs are reflected in the priorities of the next government and that real progress is made towards achieving results that make a difference in the lives of Northerners.

I also want to recognize my colleagues, who I know are working just as hard for their constituents. I will listen to their experiences, hear their concerns, and work together for the common good of all Northerners. Thank you.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Testart. We are just about at 10:30, so we will now take a 15-minute break. We will reconvene at 10:45. Thank you, Members. We are recessed.

---SHORT RECESS

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Welcome back, Members. We will reconvene the round table discussion on priorities. I will turn the floor over to Mr. Frederick Blake Jr., Member of the Legislative Assembly for Mackenzie Delta. Mr. Blake.

Mr. Frederick Blake's Speech

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I begin, I would just like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents of the Mackenzie Delta for the opportunity to represent them for the next four years. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish them a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I won't have an opportunity for the rest of the week to say that. I will be seeing them throughout the holidays in the communities.

Mr. Chair, to begin with, I'd like to say we have a number of challenges up ahead over the next four years, as we all know, especially in our economy. With the downfall in our economy, it's known that we have to focus on infrastructure spending, projects like the Mackenzie Valley Highway and also the extension of the Fibre Optic Link from Inuvik to the Yukon.

Over the last few years, now that we have cell service and Internet within communities, we've had outages through the last couple of years with the disconnection of Fibre Optic Links, whether it's in the Yukon or further south. As we have investors investing in our territory in Inuvik with the satellite stations, we need to ensure that we have no interruptions in the years to come. Having this extension of the Fibre Optic Link to the Yukon will ensure that there is no disruption. So, in order to have more people investing in our territory, we need to ensure we do not have any disruption.

We also have to work with our communities through the Building Canada Plan, and I thank the federal government for this program which gives the communities the opportunity to identify projects within the community to upgrade our infrastructure in the communities. Moving forward, we do have a commitment that this program will continue and we need to ensure, as a government, that we also provide the communities proper O and M funding and not cut back on our small communities.

Throughout the campaign, the cost of living was a major issue in my riding and throughout the Northwest Territories. I will use my riding as an example. The cost of gasoline in Aklavik at the moment is \$1.99 per litre. Yet in Whitehorse, Yukon, at this very moment it's 98 to 99 cents per litre. That's a huge challenge we are facing throughout the territory. We need to come together and come up with solutions to this problem.

As one of our leaders said this weekend, we have to take a closer look at the food basket, the cost of essential food products in our small communities. We always talk about healthy living, eating healthy, yet the vegetables and day-to-day essentials that we need are the highest costs in our small communities. We need to work with our communities to ensure we bring down the cost of living. I know it was one of our priorities in the 17th Assembly, but with all the other priorities we had, we didn't focus too much on this. I think this needs to be one of our number one priorities moving forward.

Also our languages, Mr. Chair. I know nobody has mentioned it yet today, but I strongly believe our languages need to be a top priority. Throughout our territory we have many languages that are struggling. I will just use the languages in my riding as an example, Gwich'in and Inuvialuit. Gwich'in is one of the languages that throughout our territory is somewhat endangered. Our schools – and I would like to thank them – are doing a great job in teaching the language to our youth, but we also need to think of programs for the middle-aged. We don't have anything set up right now in Aurora College. I think that that needs to be started right away.

We need to think outside the box. We have different opportunities that we always see every day. For example, Rosetta Stone. Everybody today uses electronic devices and I believe this is a great opportunity to put our Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories through that sort of program and have it available to our residents.

Also what has been brought up a number of times over the last four years, and I have brought it up, as well, is in our small communities we have an employment rate of 35 percent. That's almost 27 communities throughout the Northwest Territories. We need to set a target of at least 60 percent and ensure we meet that target over the next four years. My colleague Mr. McLeod brought this up earlier. Projects like the Mackenzie Valley Highway would create so much employment throughout our territory. Many of our communities that are cut off in the Sahtu would benefit, and also throughout the territory. With the closure of one of our mines, we have over 100 people who are going to need employment, even here in the capital and throughout the territory adding to this 35 percent.

We also have a lot of our employees who are ready to retire. In our last term it was set at about 40 to 60 percent. We need to ensure that our residents are prepared to fill those positions, and also offer more trades training in our smaller communities is what my constituents want to see.

Housing is a major priority that we need to focus on. There is a huge demand. In two of my communities, for example, we have a waiting list of up to three years. I have said a number of times throughout the last four years that the department is doing a great job replacing units, but over the next four years we need to work with the federal government and secure funding so that we can add more units in our communities throughout the territory.

Staff housing is also an issue in many of my small communities, especially for our teachers. Many of our teachers don't stay in our communities because of housing. We need to fix this problem.

Also, long-term care for our elders. In the 16th Assembly our government made the decision to take long-term care out of our smaller communities and move it to the regional centres. Many of our elders want to live in the community they lived in all their life and we need to accommodate them.

Adequate funding for schools. Recently we have taken on junior kindergarten within our current funding level. Many of our schools in the smaller communities were struggling even before this initiative. So, we need to take a step back and provide proper funding to our schools in order to ensure that our students are receiving the proper education.

Mr. Chair, I just outlined a few of our priorities moving forward. As you can tell from everybody who has spoken, there are a number of issues on our plate for this government to ensure that we fulfill. Those are the priorities that I would like to see moving forward. There are a lot of issues we have in our communities, but we will be bringing those up over the next four years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Next we have Mr. Jackson Lafferty, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Monfwi. Mr. Lafferty.

Mr. Jackson Lafferty's Speech

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. [Translation] We have to work on all the things that they have asked us to when we were elected. We also met with a lot of other leaders in the last little while. We've had many discussions about different issues that we were concerned about, but we have gone to all the communities and talked to the people. We know exactly what their concerns are and we have to look at those issues. I have been here now for how many terms? We have to look at what our priorities are. We have to look at them, and a lot of people here have expressed their concerns too. Also with the RCMP, some communities don't have any RCMP in their communities. Also, the housing shortages in the community, I would like to talk about that, and then language and culture. When you look at our languages in the Northwest Territories, we are losing a lot of our languages right now and I would like to speak on that too. But now that we're all here in the Chamber, I would like to say thank you very much, and I hope that in the future we will have a good working relationship and I know that we can make a lot of changes. [Translation ends]

...each and every one of you here today on being elected; and to newcomers, 11 of the new Members, welcome. I'd like to say a huge mahsi cho to the Tlicho constituents for having confidence in me and allowing me to serve for another four years.

We saw changes at the federal level during the election process and it had a ripple effect here in the NWT elections. The North called for a change and we have 11 new Members. This is unprecedented and it's very exciting.

We have to start doing things differently in the 18th Assembly government. We need to be innovative, very strategic when it comes to decision-making, policy changes and program delivery. One of the areas that needs focus in the 18th Assembly government is the infrastructure in the communities and, in particular, all-weather roads to the communities. A lot of our communities do not have road access to the outside world. The only way to

travel is by air, winter road, or boat. There are safety hazards and issues when travelling the winter roads. Climate change is affecting us each year and it's becoming more challenging to building winter roads due to a warmer climate and ice that is not thick enough to travel on. When the roads do open up, there is only a limited time to travel or have community supplies delivered. At times not all supplies are delivered on time due to short winter road operations, thus creating high costs of fuel, groceries and household goods in the communities. A Whati all-weather road has been in the works for the last 20 to 30 years, and finally the GNWT has a proposal into the federal government as part of the community infrastructure projects. This was part of the GNWT infrastructure priorities in the 17th Legislative Assembly, along with the Mackenzie Valley road, which is also before the federal government for consideration. We need to expedite these two major files at the federal level and move forward for the construction phase in the 18th Assembly government.

The safety of our communities is another priority. Preventing crimes should be another priority of this government. We currently have 12 out of 33 communities that do not have RCMP detachments. The partnership between GNWT and the federal government states that we pay 70 percent and they pay 30 percent of the costs of RCMP and the detachment in the community. An RCMP presence in the community is a preventative measure which will reduce the crime rates in the community. It will be a challenge to have RCMP detachments in all communities; we're fully aware of that. At the same time, we have to look for solutions. One of the solutions the federal government has been very receptive to is adding our RCMP manpower to an existing regional RCMP detachment to allow them to serve a community that does not have officers. Arrangements have been made between a community and RCMP to have an officer, at least on a part-time basis. Mr. Chair, using this model, Fort Simpson has added an officer to serve the community of Wrigley. Fort McPherson serves Tsiigehtchic, and the community of Behchoko serves the community of Gameti as well. It has worked for these communities. We need to scale up this model to reach out to those communities that badly need these services.

Another priority that I feel needs to be addressed is the caribou management in the NWT. We need a plan comparable to the Yukon Porcupine Caribou Management Plan, which has been very successful to date. The caribou population in the Yukon is ever increasing. We need to establish a similar plan in the NWT using the best practices already in existence in our neighbouring territory. Our caribou population in the NWT is declining rapidly. The Bathurst herd, Bluenose-East, Bluenose-West, the

Ahiak herd is stable at present in Nunavut, but we have to work with the new government and Inuit government to establish and also devolve a similar co-management plan in place for future generations. The caribou has been integral to our culture and way of life in the NWT and has a huge impact on each and every one of us.

One of the concerns we hear over and over in our communities as well as at our community meetings is the housing issue. There is an outcry to overhaul the NWT Housing policies and programming so they better meet the needs of our communities. We need to re-examine our way of delivering the housing programs at the community level. There isn't enough housing in some of the communities. Where there is housing, these houses are not always accessible to those most in need. The current policies and procedures of the NWT Housing Corporation appear to be either directly or indirectly creating barriers for community members to qualify for these vacant units. They either make too much money or they simply do not make enough money. They all tend to fall through the cracks. Too many of them, in my view, Mr. Chair.

Furthermore, in some communities we have some professionals such as nurses, social workers, teachers, and others that are also on the search for new units to live in, to be part of the community. In Behchoko there are over 30 professionals who work in the community but cannot live in the community. They are commuting from Yellowknife to Behchoko every day. Aside from the obvious safety concerns that arise from that hour's travel, lack of housing prevents these professionals from becoming true members of our community. We all know how important it is to have these service providers connected to our communities. I understand these policies were in place to regulate housing; however, the fact remains that these policies are preventing people from accessing life's necessities and preventing necessary services and resources to our communities. It is time we review and change these policies.

Another issue, the one that is dear to my heart, is the state of our Aboriginal languages in the NWT. I was listening intently to our two Premier candidates' speeches. Language and culture were not part of their platforms or given a priority. We would be remiss if we do not include Aboriginal language and culture in the 18th Assembly government. Our language is our identity. Aboriginal languages not only define those of us who are of Aboriginal descent, they define all Northerners. It is through our language that we express our culture, our history, our traditional ways of knowing. It is this traditional way of knowing and being at the core of what we are in the North. Traditional ways and language are consensus government. Traditional ways and language will guide us in economic and

environmental sustainability. Traditional ways and language will guide us on how we deal with our children, how we deal with caribou populations and how we deal with all NWT priorities. Traditional ways and language is what will keep our North strong. We are on the verge of losing some of the languages such as Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun and Cree, just to name a few. If we do not do anything to preserve these languages in the 18th Assembly government, they will be lost and forgotten along with the knowledge that has kept our culture strong since the beginning of time.

If we are serious about saving and preserving our language and culture, I would like to propose creating a portfolio, a department of language and culture. It should have the same attention and focus as any other department such as the Department of Transportation, Department of Education, Department of Health, Municipal and Community Affairs, et cetera. I would like to see a newly created portfolio on language and culture with operating funds. This, in my view, is the only way to save in the Northwest Territories.

[Translation] Today when you look at it, when you look at your language and culture, we identify our language by our culture and language. My grandparents, my great forefathers' language, it's their language and it's their culture and my culture. That is what I think we identify with. We have to take our language and our culture in the front and we can support one another. We can be strong in the North with our language and culture. I am very happy to have spoken my language and in the next four years I want to speak in my language more. [Translation ends]

GNWT needs a government that thinks outside the box. It needs to be a government that looks at all the needs and priorities mentioned by my colleagues around the table here who spoke previously, including infrastructure, housing, policing, caribou and, at the heart of it all, our language and culture. Mahsi cho, Mr. Chair.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Next I have Mr. Shane Thompson, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Nahendeh. Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Shane Thompson's Speech

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, colleagues. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share with you today the priorities of the Nahendeh region and how they fit into our 18th Assembly's priorities.

As I was working on my speech over the past three days, I started thinking of how and what I was going to present here today. When thinking about the priorities, I kept going back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow states that people are motivated to

achieve certain needs. When one's needs are fulfilled, the person seeks to fulfill the next one, and so on and so on. The five stages, or stage model, is divided in basic and growth needs. Every person is capable and has desire to move up the hierarchy towards a level of self-actualization. Unfortunately, process is often disrupted by failure to meet lower level needs. Life experiences, including divorce and loss of jobs, may cause an individual to fluctuate between levels of hierarchy.

The five levels are: biological and physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteemed needs, and self-actualization needs. I will not break down each point here today as I only have 15 minutes to articulate what I envision for the 18th Assembly, but I would like to encourage you to Google Maslow's hierarchy of needs when you have the chance.

When I decided to run five months ago to become an MLA for the Nahendeh riding, I was told by a wise person to listen to the people and write things down before developing a platform. This is what my team and I did, and here is what we heard.

Our health. Investment in preventive and proactive health care, enhance and focus on collective healing in the communities for prenatal, mental health and addiction programs. Address our health facilities' deficiencies in small communities and expand our MOUs with other provincial governments to meet the needs of our residents. I believe that we should be leaders in this country by focusing on preventive and proactive health care in the communities.

One of the avenues is to increase funding for quality physical literacy programs and active recreation programs. Yes, you've heard it here first. Be creative and start focusing on prevention, not treatment.

Focus on a collective healing on all people in the communities. We need enhancements to prenatal programs and care. Be creative to bring mental health and addiction programs closer to home. Do not take people away. Bring it to the people.

Investigate options with other provincial governments to access their health needs and services to help us, our people.

Our education, provide the necessary funding to provide quality early childhood education, enhance opportunities for all residents to gain skills and qualifications to contribute to their and NWT's future. Establish a community, regional and territorial centre for learning excellence dedicated to advance student achievements.

Increase partnerships with business communities to develop entrepreneurial skills or trades skills. Early childhood programs, such as Junior Kindergarten

programs and Head Start programs, are critical to our children's well-being, and to ensure that they are given the best start in education, they need to be funded differently than the student/teacher ratio we presently use.

Trades and access programs need to be offered in communities that have Aurora College programs for students wishing to succeed to go down south. Let's give them the success they need at home first.

We need physical literacy and education programs in schools in the Northwest Territories. Healthy mind, healthy body, makes healthy people.

Storefront to encourage community residents to continue their education. Education doesn't stop when you finish school; it's ongoing and we need to be able to offer that to our residents. We need to partner with business to expand students' knowledge and opportunity for success. Support to students and teachers so teachers can teach, so they can actually teach in the classroom for the benefit of our students. That means more SNAs and mental health workers in the schools. Reduce student/teacher ratios so they are in line with Canada. We have a number of challenges in the Northwest Territories and they need to be addressed. By having higher student/teacher ratios, it does not help.

Our youth, increased community funding for youth, team social programs, develop or enhance programs that focus on self-leadership development for youth. Increase physical literacy and leadership opportunities. Emphasis on programs that engage both youth and elders together. Bridge that gap. Enhance education for mental health, addiction, physical health education, and develop programs that create opportunities for life skills education.

This is important to me and the residents of Nahendeh and the Northwest Territories. Politicians talk about how important youth are and we need to do something about it. Unfortunately, this is not the reality of past governments. We only invest \$1 million in this area with a \$1.6 billion budget. Shame on us. They are our future and should be treated as such. We need to increase funding by at least four or five times as much as we have in there right now.

Our homes, address housing needs that will enhance housing programs and support for youth ownership. Deal with homelessness. It is sad across the Territories. Focus on quality housing construction for sustainable infrastructure and local job opportunities. Ensure quality and safe elder housing in every community. We need to find a way to get young people into housing units with opportunity to purchase them. As you heard from

some of my other colleagues today, you either make too much money or not enough to get into these homes. Shame on us.

We have youth returning from home being successful in school, listening to us and following their dream, but we do not allow them to follow their dreams in their communities because we do not have adequate housing. I'm not blaming it on the housing association, but I am blaming it on us, the government, because we have not found a way to get them in homes.

We need to help them get their feet under them. We need to develop senior complexes and homes in smaller communities so elders can stay in their community. Why do they need to move to another community? Where is the respect in that?

Our roads, enhance funding necessary to repair and maintain existing highways. Enhance year-round access to communities in the North Slave, Deh Cho and Sahtu for the benefit of residents and visitors. Enhance job creation, training opportunities, while ensuring safety on roads and by building and maintaining emergency shelters. Somebody needs to address that. We blame each other. It's not Transportation; it's not ITI. Well, it's the government; we should be dealing with it. The transportation system needs to be addressed. Communities' voices need to be heard and listened to. They cannot be told they do not need something. The roads in the regions need to be funded better for the safety of the residents and tourists alike. The ferry hours need to be increased and potentially looked at better locations to increase service and potential reduction of some operation costs. There are answers out there. We need to look at them.

As well, departments must understand and make decisions for the whole territory. Looking at the issues for potential community driver restrictions is an example. That needs to be addressed. The smaller communities don't benefit from it.

Our economy, students who return from university and college need to be guaranteed opportunities to get a job. Encourage partnership with northern companies and First Nations to provide the necessary services and work that is required. North first. Strengthen and diversify the economy, invest in the Mackenzie Valley Highway, all-weather roads for the communities in the Nahendeh, the Sahtu and the North Slave that do not have existing roads right now.

Bring back the Hire North process. It worked. You look and talk to the people out there who took the program, they were successful. We give them the skills, it helps industry as well. We've heard about our communities. We've heard about the shortfall in funding to our communities. We need to fund our

communities like we do education and health. The Department of Municipal Affairs and Community Affairs and NWTAC have developed a report and showed the shortfall, and funding has not increased in that department. It's our communities, ladies and gentlemen. We need to address that.

Our treaties, we need clarity and certainty to move forward in the 18th Assembly. To do this we need to expand on one of the 17th Assembly's priorities of building a strong and sustainable future. We need the Government of the Northwest Territories to truly negotiate with the outstanding Aboriginal groups so they can implement all final agreements in this, the 18th Assembly. In the Nahendeh riding we have two agreements – the Dehcho First Nation and Acho Dene Koe – and they are very close to being ratified. I believe that both parties negotiate cooperatively and in good faith. We will celebrate in the next two years the closing of their agreement and the signing.

Certainty for public servants. I believe we need to work with all our public servants to come up with creative solutions to address our difficult financial situation. I'm not just talking about the senior bureaucracy; I am talking about all civil servants. Cutting filled positions to save money isn't necessarily the option when we are a small territory. People will leave and populations will decline. We need to remember, we are a unique part of Canada and we should be modelling innovative thinking.

You've heard from my other colleagues about language and high cost of living, and I will not speak of them today. I think everyone here articulated it well, and I believe the other eight will be speaking on that behalf.

In closing, we need to work together. I always felt that Members of the Legislative Assembly should be individuals who are willing to listen to the people, identify the issues, seek all the facts, and ultimately work towards solutions. In some situations it may be necessary to work harder to find alternative ways to get things done. We need to be working hard to be creative to address difficult situations. For me, it's always about working for the people in the communities of the Northwest Territories to meet common needs and goals. Mahsi cho, koana, thank you.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Next we have Mr. Herb Nakimayak, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Nunakput. Mr. Nakimayak.

Mr. Herbert Nakimayak's Speech

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning to all my colleagues here. It's nice to listen

that a lot of our initiatives and issues in our regions across the territory are very similar. Housing seems to be a big one. I'm going to start off with that.

Housing in Nunakput in some of the smaller communities, the situation that some people face is a reality that there are a lot of homeless people. A lot of these homeless people are in their twenties and early thirties. That generation group is suffering from mental well-being; in fact, so much so that they cannot focus on their children's lives, their education, a lot of them are not graduating from high school, and so this group of young people are not being employed on projects around the region. In fact it gets worse than that; a lot of them recycle in and out of jail and this is a huge issue. To house someone in jail is very costly, but to set out programs and initiatives would alleviate that and would bring more sense of pride to the community.

There are many homeless people and there is a lot of overcrowding, and that means not just the grandparents, there are three generations of people in one house and that is a lot. We've seen single dwellings, multi-dwellings, initiatives and programs, but we need to think outside the box, as many of you say, and put more money into housing and put more homes in our communities. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but to restructure that gives us an opportunity. There are so many bright people in this room and this gives us a fair chance. I look at this as one big project. Every project is finite, there is a beginning and an end, so we have four years to make sure that these programs run as best they can, and with the capacity in this room I think we can give it a really good shot and start off with the right foot.

Education and employment is another big one in our communities. Starting from preschool, a lot of kids going into kindergarten, I wouldn't say a lot, but a small percentage do know their ABCs, and to children who don't know their ABCs and are catching up to the rest are not going to have a good start in school and are going to struggle all the way through. We need to focus on early childhood development. It costs money, but in the end you are doing preventive maintenance; you are ensuring that the kids get the quality education that they deserve going up through high school. As well, from K-12 we need to focus on the culture. Like Jackson says, we need to focus on a cultural-based education as well. If our children are having identity loss issues, then they are not going to focus so much on their education, they are not going to be included in the projects that they should be included in for their age groups, so we need to focus on having culture, having more harvesting camps and cultural practices within our schools. My region is predominantly Inuvialuit, so we are focusing on travel to some of the communities. I see in Ulukhaktok there is a very strong education system

there, and I think we need to utilize that as setting standards for our education system in the North in the smaller communities. I would encourage all the new Cabinet to travel up to our communities and see the differences between the worst possible case and the best system that is working, then you will know what to do coming back in this next Legislative Assembly. For me that is very important, so as soon as we form Cabinet, I am going to invite the Ministers up to my region to do a tour and work closely with the people and see the situation right from the housing, education and employment, as well as the impacts of climate change.

Back to education and employment. Now that we have people graduating from high school, people going into university or college, we need to support them in more ways than one. I have some complaints of some residents who have gone away to attend school and they have lost their home coming back. So, coming back, they come back to nothing. They start from zero again and we cannot put our residents through this any longer. We will need to look at the processes of that for housing and education. All of these departments align and work together, so we need to focus on that, we need to be accommodating to college students. By accommodating them, we will retain as many students and prospective employees with the GNWT. No matter what they have trained in, the goal is to retain as many as possible. I saw the last report. There was a lot of money being spent on training and education, and we need to focus on retaining the expertise in the territory. Although you cannot tell people where to go and what to do,, people simply make life choices, and we need to understand that and focus on that as well. So, to draw the line, there's a very fine line. Sometimes we don't know if we're walking on the other side, but we need to promote education, culture and employment, and very, very much so.

Also, moving forward to employment, I see there are a lot of Aboriginal people working within the GNWT. We need to mentor more Aboriginal educated people into positions of deputy ministers. I see a lot of MLAs here that are Aboriginal people. Kudos to you, but we need to focus on mentoring programs, as well, to retain our employees and bring back a sense of pride to the communities that they come from.

Climate change. Talking about climate change, I was in Tuktoyaktuk and I've seen some of the effects of it, the shoreline erosion along the coast on the west side of the community. We're going to have to develop a plan very, very soon. The plans that they have in place need to be looked at, reassessed and implemented as soon as we can. There are some homes that will probably hit the shore in the next couple of years. That being said, the shoreline erosion is happening more and more.

The permafrost melting, that community is being affected the most. The cost of the infrastructure due to climate change is going to be really, really big.

We are the thermostat of everything that's going on due to climate change. A lot of my colleagues were in Paris for the COP21 coming back with an action plan. We need to utilize that as well as all the federal government initiatives that are coming out. We need to be proactive and look at these opportunities for our regions. That means a lot of work and building your team. Thursday we'll have a team and we know where to start. I think it's important for us to work together no matter what, no matter where. If we disagree, climate change is going to have a huge impact on all of our communities.

Moving forward to food security. Food security in the coastal communities is at the forefront of the changes. In recent years food security has increasingly become a topic of a conversation that is gaining more and more attention worldwide. What does food security mean to those that call the Arctic home? Food security is more than calories, more than nutrients; it's the entire Arctic ecosystem and the relationships between all components within. It's about how our cultures teach us when, where, how to obtain, process, store and consume the food that we harvest on the land. We need to focus on that as well as including our indigenous knowledge and how it will aid in eliminating these changes we are facing on climate change. Climate change for me is a big issue. I see it in my community. It definitely has an impact on how we harvest.

Moving forward from there, we need to focus on our hunters and trappers that hunt and trap in the Northwest Territories. We need to tie this into cultural education as well. Our hunters' hunting and trapping system is the best in the world. We need to promote that more and more, showcase it. It gives our families and our communities a sense of pride, and that's the easiest program to manage moving forward. The resources are not always just underground, they're walking on the land. The hunting and trapping aspects along the coast, we need to look at that as an industry itself, too, and harvesting on Banks Island. There are thousands and thousands of muskox we can look at, too, as a source of food and a source of an economy for the North during these hard times.

A lot of colleagues mentioned the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Starting the process on that will help with the struggling economy with the closure of mines. Down the road there will be more mines that close, so we're going to face more and more hardships in the time to come. So, I think we need to focus on the aspect of that. The Inuvik-Tuk Highway is a good example. There are a lot of Aboriginal people from all over Canada working on that project, and

we need to learn from the mistakes and also improve our strong points on that project to hire and educate our people from our region. We need to utilize more resources into that project from the Northwest Territories.

Moving forward, I want to talk about the leadership that we have coming into this new Legislature. This is for a lot of us our first time, and I believe that we have the capacity to make a lot of changes to this government for the betterment of our communities and our territory. Once we start to put our teams together and work on projects, we need to keep in mind that we are only people and we are only here for four years. I look forward to working with everybody in our region, my communities, the four communities. It doesn't mean I just represent those four; I am working with the whole Northwest Territories.

In closing, I am happy to be of assistance to anyone and everyone in this room and beyond on the projects that we are looking forward to over the next four years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Nakimayak. Next we have Ms. Caroline Cochrane, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Range Lake. Ms. Cochrane.

Ms. Caroline Cochrane's Speech

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. During my campaigning process to become the MLA for Range Lake, I promised to solicit, listen and act on the concerns and the solution provided by my neighbours. In fulfilling this promise, I spent the last few days compiling every note that was taken, every comment, every solution that they provided, and doing some grouping to define the priorities that I'm going to put forward. They are not in order; they are just as they came.

The first priority that I will talk about is addressing the high cost of living for northern residents. Residents are struggling to maintain their homes and enjoy a comparable quality of life similar to communities in the South. To address this, the GNWT needs to review areas affecting cost of living including the high utility costs, increasing child care supplements for families, addressing the freight costs that are impacting food costs to the communities and supplies, initiate local food production incentives, reinstate the provision of retrofit programs to lower the energy costs, and negotiate the northern tax allowance benefit from the federal government.

The next priority that I've taken from the comments of the constituents is to ensure the government services are provided in a transparent, accountable manner. The residents of the North have been really loud in their request for more transparency and accountability. In order to accommodate this,

the GNWT needs to ensure public input whenever possible. We need to provide increased opportunities for public awareness of major government issues and initiatives. We need to work in true partnerships with applicable stakeholders to define and evaluate major decisions and initiatives. We also need to review all government departments, including resource allocations and program deliveries. We need to ensure that our budget allocations are approved within a financially sustainable manner with the goal of limited to no borrowing.

The third priority that I have identified is to ensure a sustainable and prosperous economy. As many Members have stated, the low commodity pricing has caused low investments within the North, so we are really in danger of losing our current mining and mineral exploration investments, which will affect many businesses and families within our communities. To address this, the GNWT needs to review the legislation governing regulatory boards and the policies regarding subcontracting, the BIP process. We need to promote mining and exploration opportunities with a northern hire focus. We need to strengthen the northern hire policies and practices, as we seem to be losing a lot of jobs to the South. We need to look at diversifying the economy so that mining and exploration is not the only business that we support in the North. Through that, we need to promote local businesses and we need to invest in renewable resources. We also need to develop the infrastructure to accommodate potential economic opportunities. We need to review the devolution revenue agreement with the federal government and we need to develop and adhere to a long-term strategic plan to ensure economic growth and stability within our territory.

The next group of concerns brings the priority in developing nation-to-nation partnerships to ensure the successful completion of land claims and self-governance agreements. The completion of land claims and self-governance agreements is critical to ensuring easier negotiations for private industries that are interested in investing in the Territories. It's also really critical to address the healing process that we need for indigenous people within the North. Indigenous people represent 50 percent of our population and they need to be able to define their own future. The GNWT needs to continue negotiations with indigenous groups to complete land claim agreements satisfactory to both the GNWT and the individual groups.

One thing that hasn't been mentioned is we also need to work with the indigenous groups to start preparing for the assuming of programs applicable for self-government agreements. It's one thing to give an agreement, it's another to provide the tools so they can succeed.

Another priority identified is to ensure affirmative action legislation, policies and procedures reflect the needs of all applicable populations. The GNWT Affirmative Action Policy has been implemented for a reason. I'm not going to go over them again. We must ensure that they are implemented as intended. We need a complete review of all policies and procedures to strengthen the recruitment and retention of affirmative action candidates. Those include gender, disabilities and indigenous people.

Another priority – I have a lot of priorities – is to address the issue of climate change and sustainable environment. The fact that climate change is affecting the North at a factor rather than other countries and the devastating impact of climate change makes this a critical priority that we can't ignore. The GNWT needs to focus on water monitoring, alternative energy, public consultation on land issues that are critical, such as fracking, preservation of wildlife such as the caribou, negotiating acceptable land preservation with economic development stakeholders, public education to our population and staying on top of the best practice research on climate change.

We also need to increase northern-based educational resources. So, ensuring that transferrable skills are critical to ensuring a strong North and making sure that we are prepared when the economy does pick up, because it will pick up. In doing that, the GNWT needs to increase our funding to education. We need to ensure, as another Member stated, that the funding for junior kindergarten is available for a program that has already been implemented in the Territories. We also need to ensure funding for classroom supports is maintained. We can't take from one vulnerable population to give to another vulnerable population. We need to expand our transferable post-secondary opportunities, integrate post-secondary opportunities into the communities and community services such as utilizing the hospital as a community agency to offer programs. We need to expand our apprenticeship opportunities and we need to increase partnerships with accredited universities throughout Canada.

As well, we need to ensure that cultural awareness is provided to all community professionals, provide English classes to all people wishing this support. A lot of people who are new to Canada are saying they are limited to who can obtain English classes, and that is not acceptable. We need to expand our French education opportunities.

Another priority identified by my neighbours is to increase the population of the NWT in a strategic manner. The GNWT receives revenue for each resident of the NWT. However, we must ensure that we have the infrastructure to accommodate these people. We must develop a strategic population growth plan that addresses the need to entice more

people to move to the North and considers all infrastructure needs to address the influx of people.

We also need to increase the health support available within the NWT. As stated, Northerners complain about the lack of health care in the North and the disruption to their lives when having to access health care in southern cities. The GNWT needs to increase their professional recruitment and retention practices. We need to increase community health support utilizing local people whenever possible. We need to increase health education opportunities. We need to review the financial limitations on accessing health care. We need to increase the use of health supports such as doulas and alternative health options. We need to increase long-term care support to address the growing seniors population. We need to review indigenous health supports available to residents throughout the NWT. We need to develop a long-term strategic plan to develop additional health support within the Territories.

Another priority identified was to ensure the vulnerable populations are cared for within a comprehensive, supportive manner. The NWT is only as strong as its weakest members. Within the North we are seriously lacking support for marginalized populations including homeless people, seniors, people living with disabilities, low income families, those suffering with addictions and those with mental health concerns.

The federal government has promised investment in social supports and we need to ensure that as Northerners we access this opportunity. We also need to conduct a comprehensive review of the current programs to ensure we are investing our monies in areas of greatest need.

As well, affordable housing. We need to increase affordable housing within the NWT. Affordable housing is a serious issue in the North with single and low-income families struggling to survive with high priced markets and multiple families living in community housing. To address this, the GNWT needs to ensure that the federal government keeps its promise to invest in housing infrastructure.

The last priority identified by my neighbours is strengthening family supports. In an effort to entice and retain people within the North, we need to ensure that the people have the supports necessary to survive and thrive. The GNWT needs to strengthen early childhood development supports and increase support for children, youth, parents and families.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to working with the MLAs in actualizing the priorities identified.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Next and probably the last that we will do today before we break for lunch is Mr.

Danny McNeely, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Sahtu. Mr. McNeely.

Mr. Daniel McNeely's Speech

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is a great privilege to sit here today and participate in the developments of the four-year plan for this 18th Assembly, making it a healthy, effective and transparent government.

We have sat here for the last several weeks now, a couple of weeks, and we have heard our priorities during our election campaign, which I will speak to, and I kind of view it as a collective approach in gathering the priorities over the last couple of weeks into a consolidated approach. This is what we are doing to collectively put our list together.

Some of the things that I have heard in my riding, as you know and I have mentioned it earlier, it is probably the most isolated area. Within two years, as mentioned, the other regions will see one or more communities connected by an all-weather road connection and I am glad to hear a lot of Members speaking towards the pursuance of our Mackenzie Valley Highway, a project that has a long history and goes back to the John Diefenbaker days and the creation of the Hire North Program.

Some of the issues and priorities for the Sahtu region include a new school that is needed in the small community of Colville Lake. We have talked on the importance of education and post-secondary education and furthering our youths to gain knowledge prior to entering the workforce, so that is a priority of mine.

Also, another building needed is the health centre in Tulita. It is getting old and the health delivery of services to a healthy community only makes for a productive one. So, that is another priority there, as well as the highway.

Some of the other challenges facing us here is the conclusion of devolution. As you heard from our SSI chair the other day, that was brought to everybody's attention, and building on government-to-government relationships. One thing is to conclude your land claim. The next thing is to make sure it's functioning properly with the appropriate management systems, resource systems. Another thing facing this government, and it's going to be a model for future governments, is the community self-government in Deline. It's going to be active within this government term, so that will be a role model for other community-based self-government projects or initiatives coming into place, so we've got to do it right, we've got to do it fair and honourably. Our agreements are only as good as how it's carried out. That's another one there.

Caribou management, as other Members mentioned, is a high priority for some of the

communities in the eastern side of our Sahtu region. They rely greatly on the management of the herd and the health of the herd, to provide future generations and current generations for food at our dinner table.

Employment is another that's very common. Most of these issues are all very common in this House here and within all 33 communities. We are also looking at the Sahtu region and having a trades centre. I'm hearing from one of the employees here that it's a costly one, but let's have a look at it. If it's effective, let's do it. If it's needed, that much more reason for doing it.

The social housing, the whole issue of housing, these are programs and projects that are carried out by this government in conjunction with the federal government.

Health travel. In the whole area of program delivery, as one of my previous colleagues said, is that we have to see how effective these programs are. If they're really not effective, how can we make them more effective than their current state, or maybe they are just played out and there's no need for that program and the funds and resources could be allocated to a more priority point.

Home care and daycare facilities is another one that I heard in my visits, and we'll be addressing that as we move along. Being a self-sufficient region. The Sahtu region is isolated, as I mentioned earlier. It's also isolated to the point where it's reporting and having to report to other areas. Why do we even call it the Sahtu region? I just don't know. Just to give you an example, our probation officers have to report to Inuvik. Why do they have to report to Inuvik? I don't know; so I'll be pursuing that as another priority of independence for our Sahtu region.

Accountability, transparency, prudent spending, effective spending by this government was another hot issue presented to me during my community visits, so I think we can all come to the conclusion that it's a very needed drive for this 19 Member Assembly to send that message out there that we're going to be accountable to the people who we represent and to the North and to our riding as well. We're going to be transparent with the open decision-making process. We're going to have government-to-government relations and we're going to execute that by going to the communities. As one of the previous leaders mentioned, within the next 12 months we're going to have ministerial Cabinet meetings in the regions, so that is evidence to show that we're trying to be transparent and prudent in watching our tight, tight fiscal position.

Other management skills that are a priority and will be developed are not only the government-to-government relationships there but the internal

House of this Assembly to work collectively between our Executive Council and the other Members and moving towards effectiveness doing a mid-term review to see how you are doing. Are you living up to the expectations as promised? As well, that mid-term review should include are we meeting the goals and objectives as set out in our priority transition now? Are we fulfilling the mandate?

Education delivery, gender equality, these are all programs, housing, social issues, child welfare, to me these are all priorities of the programs that will be set. Effective management will say how do you deliver that, as one of my previous colleagues mentioned. I will probably continue to say "previous colleagues," because we are all very similar in terms of setting our priorities. I have economic initiatives, just like the other speakers. We should do an action plan, a strategic plan to see what the plan is over the next four years. Monitor as we go along, and if we are achieving 10 out of the 20 goals set, let's take those off the list and move on to the other 10 that aren't finished.

Investor confidence to support our economy, there are things this government could do to support the economy. Initiation of the Mackenzie Valley Highway is a priority for myself, for my region and for the chair who spoke to it here on Saturday. I look forward to sharing some of my financial options provided to me on the underwriting of this project, so we can see if that financial model is going to work in conjunction with our current government's fiscal situation.

Investor confidence and certainty taken into account the regulatory reform, there are things that were made to this government by the Neil McCrank report in 2008. Have those recommendations to provide investor confidence been completed? If not, are there parts of that report that we can carry on to this 18th Assembly that will provide investor confidence and carry on to a more prosperous economy now that you've got investment coming in?

Money coming into our territory, exploiting our strengths and exercising our potential. Building highways is one. Regulatory certainty is one. There is a wide range of certainties that we can share out there as priorities to build a stronger economy base there from the private sector.

I also know there has been a number of work that was undertaken by the 17th Assembly. Devolution, we are hearing about that. It's really not concluded. There is some unfinished business there. Let's finish that and move on. There is the issue of fracking that has high potential for resource development, but that's an ongoing discussion issue. I look forward to that being a priority so we can all come to an accommodation.

I would like to say in closing, I know we are faced with many challenges under tight, tight fiscal and financial restraints. I think the democratic process of November 23rd has spoken in favour of a good, diverse group that we have here. I think we all have a great wealth of contribution to bring to the driving force and direction that we are going to set for the next four years. I really look forward to working with everybody through a consensus government on implementation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. We will now break for one hour and reconvene at 1:00 p.m.

---LUNCH RECESS

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Welcome back, Members. We will resume the priority-setting round table discussion that was commenced this morning. I will turn the floor over to Mr. Lou Sebert, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Thebacha. Mr. Sebert.

Mr. Louis Sebert's Speech

MR. SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all I would like to thank the voters of Thebacha for the faith they've put in me by electing me to this Assembly, and I congratulate all other MLAs for their election, or acclamation in one case.

I have listened carefully to the speakers this morning who have raised many important issues for us to consider as we set our priorities for the 18th Assembly. We also heard from and must consider the issues and concerns raised at our meeting with northern leaders on Saturday.

For the last two weeks and prior to that as I went door to door in my riding during the election campaign, certain themes emerged which should, in my view, guide us to set those priorities.

One of the themes we all heard a good deal about and have discussed extensively since we arrived here two weeks ago is the issue of transparency and accountability. I was very pleased to hear that during their speeches, both candidates for Premier addressed this important issue and are committed to change. We have already started down the path to greater transparency and accountability by opening up the selection of Premier and Cabinet, and in fact, meeting today is part of that.

More should and will be done. I would suggest we adopt the concept of a mid-term review, which was done in several Assemblies in the past. A review of both the mandate and performance of Ministers.

The GNWT is an important employer, contractor and the deliverer of services in all of our communities. Another way of ensuring accountability, in my view, is the creation of the office of ombudsman, hardly a new concept,

originating centuries ago in Scandinavia and now existing in nine of the 10 provinces and in the Yukon territory. This idea is not new in the Territories, either, having been discussed for more than 20 years and favourably reviewed by a standing committee chaired by Mr. Nadli in the last Assembly where the position was described as a single point of contact for NWT residents who are concerned they are unfairly treated. Our powers and responsibilities have grown since devolution, and the creation of this office would act as a constraint and counterweight to the sometimes overwhelming power of government.

Economic issues I would like to address. We have heard a good deal about economic issues and disparities in the last two weeks. Certainly during the campaign I heard a good deal about the issue of available and affordable child care. As we heard on Saturday from Ms. Wawzonek, this is some of the main issues of concern for the YWCA. We like to think of ourselves as a progressive jurisdiction, yet we have fallen behind other jurisdictions both outside and inside Canada in this regard.

A recent study filed with this House in June should not be ignored. The study revealed that child care was not widely available and very expensive, between \$39 and \$62 a day. The study noted that Quebec, a large but not particularly wealthy province, was providing child care for its citizens for approximately \$7 a day. Child care costs fall disproportionately on those with lower incomes. A child care program on the Quebec model would allow parents, particularly mothers, to join the workforce, if they choose. There are costs involved, but these would be offset to some extent by the entry of more women into the workforce and the resulting increase in tax arrears.

Minimum wage. Another way of dealing with income disparities in our society is the minimum wage. I am aware, of course, that we have recently raised the minimum wage to \$12.50 an hour. I understand that Alberta is contemplating a minimum wage of approximately \$15 an hour. Studies have shown that in 2014 there were approximately 1,000 people in the Northwest Territories, 400 in Yellowknife and 600 outside, who were receiving \$10 and \$13 an hour. We should not think of these people as teenagers looking for extra money for weekends, as they are often heads of families, often immigrants. Can they really live on \$12.50 an hour, which is approximately half of what we pay to starting government workers? These people need a hand-up, not a handout, and I suggest we should readdress this issue.

Last Assembly, the 17th, made considerable progress in their relations with Aboriginal governments, our partners. Many of the Aboriginal partners have signed under devolution. Finalizing the remaining land claims will have several good

effects, providing greater certainty of land ownership. It will clarify the issue of land access and make more land available for regional development. All of these things will provide more certainty to government and to industry.

In our meetings on Saturday, I sensed the desire from all parties to get on with this process. We should not miss this opportunity.

We heard last week about the large number of people, our fellow citizens, involved in the justice system, far more than in southern jurisdictions. We have an incarceration rate approaching that of the Americans. This is not a model we wish to follow. We must attempt to reduce the crime rate and those appearing before court by addressing the root causes with anti-drug programs, employment and housing initiatives. We should also have a treatment centre within the Northwest Territories.

When people appear before the courts, the courts have started with several new options, including domestic violence treatment options, so-called DVTO court, and Wellness Court. These programs are working successfully in Yellowknife and Hay River. I understand that DVTO court is to be expanded shortly to Fort Smith. That option should be made available to other residents of the Northwest Territories where there are resources.

The NWT Association of Municipalities, in their presentation on Saturday, identified a \$40 million funding shortfall. In a report prepared by the Conference Board of Canada, included with their submission, it was stated that the gap in funding, or closing the gap in funding, rather, would create more than 200 jobs a year and would have a positive impact on the gross domestic product of the Northwest Territories. Finding funding for this may be difficult, but we must not underfund the level of government that is closest to the people in our communities.

The studies we looked at in the last couple of weeks have revealed an education gap between ourselves in the Northwest Territories and the rest of Canada. We must attempt to close this gap. We should enhance the programs we already have. We should also think, in my view, about a university in the North. Location may be an issue, but I think we should remember that one of our communities already has extensive infrastructure, teachers and room for expansion.

So, for all of us, both new and returning MLAs, we have set out many hopes and aspirations for the 18th Assembly. Doubtless, many of these will be constrained by the economic and other issues, but I sense a spirit in this Assembly to proceed with some of these ambitious programs we have set out today. I look forward to working with you to achieve those goals. Thank you.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Sebert. Next we have Mr. Tom Beaulieu, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Mr. Tom Beaulieu's Speech

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. [English translation not provided.]

I realize there is no translation, just quickly addressing some of the elders. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Chair, I would like to discuss my priorities at this point. I would like to first of all thank the people of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh for re-electing me on November 23rd. I would also like to congratulate the other Members of the Assembly here today. I know how hard you have to work in order to be elected and I am sure that the people have made full efforts and work harder sitting in the room today as all candidates have worked hard.

The number one issue that we face, not only in my riding but in the small communities across the Northwest Territories, is employment. I find that if we increase employment and people have their incomes, they would be able to address their issues on their own. Right now the highest number of complaints come from people wanting assistance from the government. Whether it be income or whether it be assistance to repair their homes, it is always something they need because they don't have the money or the income. Many people live on income support, and I have said many times in the House and many times during my campaign that we are dealing in small communities where employment rates are 35 percent. In some cases, lower.

I and another Member in the House here who represents small communities, at the beginning of last term had no communities that had an employment rate of 40 percent. When you think about that and when you think about the employment rates across the country, it is about 70 percent, so seven out of every 10 individuals in a household, or four in Yellowknife, and it gets as high as 80 percent, which is good, and that is a positive thing. That is four out of every five members of a household have jobs. In our small communities that is just a dream. We have aspired for employment rates of 60 percent or even 50 percent so that at least half of the people in households have jobs. Anytime you get a job, it is always better than income assistance. We all know there is a direct correlation between income and addictions, income and education levels, income and health outcomes of our people. It is a proven fact that the lower your income, the less healthy you are. So that makes income so, so important. It will also lower the costs to government.

Another priority for me is early childhood development. This has to be a priority of this government. Early childhood development spending has tremendous returns, the highest returns anywhere, including on the markets. The returns of early childhood development is tenfold. The government must invest in prenatal work, Healthy Family programs, and work on developing the communities. Investments must be made into daycare, into child care in order that we benefit, that the communities benefit from this.

Infrastructure spending must be done close to the people who need it most. We need to spend our money out there so that people have jobs, so that people become less dependent on government. That's what we need to see.

We need to continue to work with Infrastructure Canada to get the Mackenzie Valley Highway approved, to get the highway to Whati built, to get the road built in the Slave Geologic Province so that it makes it more efficient for the resource industry to get the resources out onto the land and start paying resource revenues but, more importantly, to extend their lives so that people have work. Because at some point when the margins aren't there they are going to shut down, and that's going to be more people unemployed.

Health and social services is now spending \$1.12 million per day. However, there is not enough being spent on prevention. We need to spend money on prevention. We know that there is a lot of spending that can be done in addictions, mental health, and all of the various issues that people are faced with like alcoholism and smoking. We must do everything we can to provide people the tools they need to prevent diabetes, heart disease and cancer. That's where we're spending our money, on those diseases and the addictions. We must develop a strategy to lower the hospital stays in our territory by promoting healthy lifestyles. I think we all know how much it costs to keep a person in the hospital.

Land claims, on another topic, is very important. Akaitcho and Dehcho must be brought to the agreement-in-principle as quickly as possible. The GNWT must look at changing the way we do business with Aboriginal governments so that we can get to an AIP. We have the tools and we have the Aboriginal governments to work with and we have the federal government to work with. All we need to do is move forward on that. We have made progress, but more has to be made.

I am going to briefly touch on the seniors. I consider that to be very important and a very important way of saving money. I've always promoted what we call aging in place. If we look at other jurisdictions, some jurisdictions have a real good program, Aging in Place. Aging in place saves a lot of money to the

government. To put one senior in long-term care is a minimum of \$100,000. When I was the Minister of Health, I asked for those statistics, and the low end was \$98,000 and the high end was \$124,000 per senior per year. I've always said, we should fix up their homes, we should provide nursing care, home care right in their homes. We would spend way less than that, way less. Right now, we're faced with a huge, huge infrastructure cost of having to build more seniors homes, more long-term care for seniors.

For the most part, that can be avoided. As is, only 20 percent of seniors end up in long-term care anyway. If we could cut that number in half... I mean, if in one place we could, say, have 10 less seniors in a home for one year, that we're able to extend their life in their own homes for one year, 10 people, that's a million dollars, and imagine that's \$2 million if they're all couples that we're deferring. We're actually not spending. It's not really a savings, but it's preventing us from spending that money.

I think that's a very important initiative that we have to look at, and that's work between the Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services. A collaborative work between other departments, as well, and then we would be able to prevent individuals, seniors from going into these homes and saving the government money.

Caribou is probably the single greatest food source for Aboriginal people across the Northwest Territories, and they should have a greater say in how that resource is managed. I know that our government has talked to the Aboriginal groups, have met with the Aboriginal groups and the Aboriginal governments when they're talking about the herds that are in their area, but still, they're not 100 percent comfortable with it. People recognize it's a long ways to travel in some of the regions in order to access caribou because the healthier herds are a long ways away. We need to be able to manage it, work with the Aboriginal governments and allow people to get the caribou closer to home without having the herd diminish any further. There are ways that we can do that, and I think that's something that we would need to do a lot of work with the traditional knowledge that people have been living with the caribou for thousands of years.

I can't address all of our priorities in detail with the amount of time I have, so I'm just going to just briefly touch on a couple of other priorities that I think are important.

I think that we have to develop a youth strategy. As important as early childhood development is, youth are also important for different reasons, and that the youth being put in the right track is very important to the North and very important to the people across the territory.

We must work with the Association of Persons with Disabilities. I believe that's over 5 percent of our population. We have to ensure that those individuals are there, that they have employment, that they're taking care of their own, that they're taking care of themselves. I think that's very, very important.

I believe that we have to develop housing plans, housing development plans in every community. I think that we have to ensure that we are maximizing the use of the inventory that's on the ground. Whether it be social housing, market housing, or private housing, the development of markets in communities is so valuable that it's unbelievable. When you have a community moving from a nonmarket community to a market community and when the individual that owns a house is putting his own money into a home and he's seeing a return because that house is marketable, that makes all the difference in the world. When we're unable to develop community markets, then people lose pride in putting money into their homes and making their homes look beautiful so that they're able to live in it and live in it with pride, and then at the end of the day, if they decide to move to another community, they're actually able to sell their unit.

What I talked about will help people in many areas. It will decrease the cost of living; it will increase education levels; it will reduce costs to government; and it will increase our health indicators across the Territories. It will make our citizens healthier. Our government needs to spend strategically in those areas and our government will become more efficient, and it will be the government that the people who voted us in want. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Next we have Ms. Julie Green, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Yellowknife Centre. Ms. Green.

Ms. Julie Green's Speech

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank you for the opportunity today to talk about my priorities, and I thank the voters of Yellowknife Centre who decided I was the best choice for this job.

I want to start by repeating a sentence from Joseph Judas who addressed us on Saturday on behalf of the Tlicho government. He acknowledged the number of people who are homeless in Yellowknife, and he said, "Why are they on the street? What is the issue? If you can't have a roof over your head, you can't have a good life, a good sleep. That is a fact."

What I heard about most when I was campaigning was about homelessness downtown. It is not a Yellowknife issue, it is a territorial issue. This is the

territorial capital. It is the first place that people come usually when they fly into the North and what they see is that we have a severe problem with homelessness downtown. What I can tell you is that it takes many different forms and I'm going to talk a little bit about each one of them.

To start with I'll talk about public housing. According to the 2014 NWT Housing Survey, 44 percent of households in non-market communities have a housing problem. That means that the House is in core need of repairs where systems are compromised, or it is unsuitable or isn't large enough for the people who are living in it or it is inadequate in other ways. So the bad news is that this problem has only changed by 10 percent since 2009. The non-market communities are a little better off, but still 44 percent of the housing they have is not adequate for their needs. Meanwhile in Yellowknife, the amount of core housing need has gone up by 9 percent in all of those same areas, the need for repairs, suitability and adequacy.

The other thing that Yellowknife has that is unique to Yellowknife as a market community is an affordability problem. According to that same survey, 16 percent of households say they are paying more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing, which means they are overspending on housing. It means that their other expenses are going to be in jeopardy or not paid. They will be short of even the most basic things such as food and clothing.

There is a need for investment in housing that many Assemblies have spoken about, but this Assembly needs to be the Assembly that makes major investments in partnership with the federal government, with business, with NGOs, with the homeless people themselves. We need to make a major investment in housing all across the Northwest Territories. We need to take up the idea that there are different kinds of housing needed at different times in life. For example, we know seniors are also in desperate need of housing as the population continues to age. There is a greater demand for people to not only age in place, as Tom was talking about, but also to strengthen the continuum of housing so that people who need extra help because they have dementia, Alzheimer's and other cognitive problems have access to that. It may not be possible to serve those needs in every small community, but we need to serve those needs. We can't allow seniors to drift off on their own. I met too many people when I was campaigning who are seniors who are inadequately housed because they are not housed in safe situations. That is a need that we really need to take seriously.

We also need to look at the needs of people who are homeless. According to the City of Yellowknife who did a point in time count in May, there are 150

homeless people in Yellowknife. I personally think that number is very low. I think that the number is higher if you would include the invisible homeless population. Those are the people who are couch surfing, staying in relationships of convenience and so on in places that are unsuitable and unsafe for themselves and their families. So we need to look at what we can do for people who are homeless.

The most promising solution seems to be Housing First, which brings all the players to the table together to provide the home that Joseph Judas talked about, to have a roof over their heads, as a starting point to the rest of their lives. It's not reasonable to expect people who are homeless to succeed in treatment, retraining, employment, or any other productive choice if they don't actually have a place to live. So we need to start with that point.

The other point we need to start with is that a number of homeless people in Yellowknife are palliative addicts. That is to say they are addicts of drugs and alcohol and they are dying of their addictions, some more slowly than others. We would not allow people who were dying of cancer or diabetes or any other chronic disease to die in a stairwell, but that's what is happening here in Yellowknife. People are dying on the streets, sometimes literally, like Raymond Simpson did in the spring. Other times they are dying in places where they are inappropriately housed without adequate supports. So we need to take care of their needs. This is an investment. This group of people costs the government a tremendous amount of money. Ambulance rides up and down Franklin Avenue to the hospital, time in the hospital itself in the emergency department as in-patients, time in jails, time in the court system. If we invested in homes for people who were homeless, I truly believe that our overall spending in those other areas would go down. As a result of that, I strongly encourage it.

The other area where there needs to be a greater investment in housing is for families, for poor families. The YWCA provides transitional and emergency housing at Rockhill and they could fill that building at least twice over on any given day of the week. That's how great the demand for that housing is.

This program, which has security in the building and family support workers to support residents, is a kind of Housing First. According to an evaluation done on that program this year, it's tremendously effective. People are able to stabilize there, regain custody of their children and learn new skills that will help them be successful when they are able to move into public housing or market housing. So, we need to invest more in housing for low-income families.

The next area I want to talk about is poverty. Seventeen percent of all NWT families live in poverty, meaning that they have less than the median income, and 22 percent of children live in this situation. It's easy to see that we are not keeping up with their needs, by looking at statistics produced by the Breakfast for Learning Program as an example. They served, NWT-wide, 1.7 million meals in 2014. So, children are hungry. We heard that on the radio this morning when the caller phoned in from Tuktoyaktuk and talked about hunger. Hunger is a reality and we have not been able to figure out systematic solutions to this. The growth in the gardening movement is very helpful, but it's not enough year-round to keep people from being hungry and especially to keep these children from being hungry. Until we have children who are adequately housed where they can rest, and adequately fed so they don't have the stress of wondering where their next meal is, I feel that investment in other forms of promoting their education is not going to be as successful as it could be, because they need to have that foundation to grow from.

I also want to reiterate the points I have heard here today to invest in the zero to three-year-old population in order to have the best start possible in life. We know from research that by the time children are three years old, many of their major development functions are in place, so we need to support that as much as we are able to.

I am going to talk a little bit about family violence. Between December 2011 and December 2012, six women were murdered in the Northwest Territories and five of them were murdered by men who were known to them. This is just the worst end of the spectrum of family violence that plagues this territory at nine times the national average.

I know that people care about reducing family violence, but we need to invest in that. We can't put all our investment into one week of awareness a year and expect that we are really going to make a change in the rates of family violence in the NWT. This has to be a year-round priority so that family violence becomes as unacceptable as drinking and driving and smoking in a restaurant, that people understand this behaviour is wrong and it is not publically tolerated.

Just briefly, I realize that I haven't touched on economic issues. It is not that they don't exist in my platform but rather they have been very thoroughly canvassed here. I am very interested in seeing good planning for diversification of our economy following on the decline of the diamond mines and to invest in those areas which have already shown promising returns, which include manufacturing, fishing, trapping, gardening on a commercial scale. I think that we should look very closely at what more we can do to support those ventures,

because they create employment and they create options for people to stay in their community and do meaningful work even though those jobs do not create the same wealth that mining does.

Lastly, I just want to talk a little bit about governance. That was certainly an issue when I was canvassing. People felt, for better or worse, that the last Assembly had become a very partisan place and they really want to see better communication between the Regular MLAs and Cabinet and to see that we are all getting along to the best extent that we can. As Ethel said on Saturday, fighting divides you and prevents you from reaching your objects. So, while that is a rather bold statement and we are certainly all getting along now, I would like to think that we are all going to get along into the future, as well, so that we can work on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories. I want to say that I support the mid-term review of the performance of the Executive Council and Premier against the priorities set by the Assembly as a way for us to report on our progress, or the lack of it. I think people have shown a real appetite for new transparency and inclusion of them in our governance and we need to honour that.

Finally, and of course very importantly, I want to see women at the table whenever possible. The only way we are going to have more women elected to this Legislature is to have more women in public life in leadership roles who are role models to young women who are thinking about how they can serve the Northwest Territories. I am hopeful that we will always consider that when we are planning public events, that we will include women as leaders whenever possible to encourage the next generation of women leaders. Thank you.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Green. I will now turn to Mr. Cory Vanthuyne, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Yellowknife North. Mr. Vanthuyne.

Mr. Cory Vanthuyne's Speech

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Members. First and foremost I need to take this opportunity to say thank you to the residents of Yellowknife North for putting their trust in me and electing me as the representative to the 18th Assembly. I look forward to being their voice and protecting their interests and the interests of the greater territory as we move forward in advancing the mandate of this government.

Mr. Chair, I would like to start my comments on our government's priorities today with health and well-being. I believe that Northerners rank health care and protection of their family as their number one priority. We need to know that when we get sick, or when our children, our parent, our loved ones get

sick, that our health care system will be there for us.

I recognize that Northerners believe our government has a role to play in helping individuals to help themselves, their families and communities, through effective systems of support while ensuring that all Northerners have the opportunity to build and live meaningful lives in support of environments in vital communities.

We need to work to support those individuals with disabilities by moving forward on the NWT Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities and action the five building blocks which have been identified within the plan.

We need to work to reduce and eliminate poverty through strong support and action on the five pillars identified in the Anti-Poverty Action Plan.

We need to support and take action on the new Cancer Strategy. Healthy living is critical for prevention, but better support has to be in place for those fighting cancer and those providing care for them.

As we all heard over the course of the election and from recent meetings with leaders, we must ensure that those people with mental health and addictions concerns have access to a full range of programs and services to address physical, social, cultural and spiritual health.

Smoking is the single largest health hazard in the North. Forty-six percent of Northerners smoke. This is well above the national average. Our government has to work hard to increase the awareness of the hazards of tobacco use and support bringing educational programs into our schools to educate the next generation on the benefits of healthy living and choosing not to use tobacco.

I would like to talk about economic growth and fiscal responsibility as a priority for this government. I recognize that we are primarily a resource-based economy and we need to continue making the right investments in infrastructure that will allow responsible exploration to advance and make mining more inviting so that we can share our vast resources with the world market. However, I am also committed to diversifying the NWT's economy to help mitigate the impact of fluctuations in our natural resource sector and increase job security for all Northerners.

I believe through responsible fiscal management we can protect priority programs and services while also reducing the cost of living for all residents and lowering the costs of doing business.

We need to work to establish certainty for the economy by identifying the top priority projects that need investment over the next Assembly and beyond, that will bring a return on investment for

the economy and for the people of the territory. An example of one of those projects is the often referred to as the Road to Resources into the Slave Geological Province.

As we heard recently from the NWT Association of Communities, we need to work to ensure recommendations of the GNWT's Community Funding Formula Review are implemented and meet the funding needs of underfunded communities.

We need to continue to work on developing and implementing a Population Growth Strategy that is inclusive of an immigration policy for the territory, so that we can grow and diversify the labour force as well as grow our tax base, rather than having to consider tax increases to those who currently live here, driving up their cost of living.

We need to work toward improving service delivery to residents and businesses. That means minimizing red tape and establishing one-stop shopping services to reduce duplication and improve efficiency of those services.

Mr. Chair, I would like to talk about governance as a priority for this government. The territorial government must work hand in hand with residents, businesses and other stakeholders to define needs, define workable solutions and determine the direction of government. We need to make it easier for individuals and organizations to engage with government if we are to collaborate in the development of programs and policies that help produce a strong, vibrant and economically successful territory now and well into the future. We must all work toward a cohesive and collaborative method of achieving the priorities of this Assembly, and our government must commit to being inclusive and cooperative in working with communities and Aboriginal governments.

We need to work to develop an open and public process for the selection and appointment of members to boards, committees and agencies.

I would like to talk about arts and culture as a priority for this government. Celebrating the arts and cultural heritage improves our quality of life and adds to our sense of community and belonging. Arts and culture also have the potential to generate significant economic diversification. As a territory, we need to see more people comfortably and confidently pursuing careers in the arts. We need to examine tax credits, incentives and interest-free and forgivable loans that promote arts and culture. We need to identify adequate funding and support for core operational requirements to sustain community arts facilities, music festivals, jamborees, assemblies and special events.

I would like to talk about the cost of living as a priority for this government. I know that life in the

remote north has its challenges on many fronts, but foremost is the ability to afford living here. Due to a lack of transportation infrastructure; harsh, cold environment; limited resources and vast geography, our ability to acquire and build the necessary components to sustain life in the North can be very costly. I believe all levels of government have an important role in reducing the cost of living in the North.

We need to work with the City of Yellowknife and other communities that have a willingness to provide the Loans for Heat program that provides low interest loans, grants, or rebates for home energy efficiency upgrades. This supports reducing the cost of living and protects the environment through less use of carbon-emitting fossil fuels.

We need to support on-the-job education, professional development and training programs that promote increased earning potential. We must work to support northern agriculture and food security through the development of the Agriculture Strategy and promotion of community gardens.

We need to work with our federal MP and the new Government of Canada to ensure Northerners receive the increase in the northern residency tax deduction and work toward having that deduction set to a positive index for future years.

Mr. Chair, I would like to talk about education as a priority for this government. I believe strengthening our education system is the key to a healthy and prosperous future. It is important that learning opportunities be accessible, affordable and sustainable for all Northerners. Education that leads to employment will propel our people and territory to prosperity.

We should seek to teach the way children learn. Not all kids learn the same way, so we need a system that allows each child to focus on their strengths and support them to do so. We should be encouraging our students to choose fields of study that lead to employment, and we should be providing incentives through Student Financial Assistance to make this happen. Not every child will be an academic. We should support trades and technology and the arts as excellent career choices.

As children move through the school system, we need to measure what we value as a society and incorporate mechanisms that will encourage students to support those values as they become closer to being contributors to society.

Teachers work in challenging environments where many of the children in their classes are at different stages of learning. We need to be providing them with tools they require to support each and every student no matter what their level of learning might be. The classroom needs to be a safe, welcoming

and inclusive environment for all students at all times.

We need to support the idea of expanding post-secondary education in the North through all means, whether it's arts, academia, trades, or science and technology. This discussion starts with a review and potential change of the Education Act.

Our education system needs to be adequately funded, and that includes junior kindergarten. There are preschool programs already going on that parents pay out of pocket for, but I believe, like most, that those programs should be free of charge, and support for junior kindergarten helps achieve that.

I would like to talk about the environment and energy as a priority for this government. I believe sustaining the quality of our air, water, and land and wildlife is important to all Northerners, and that comes with the responsibility of properly protecting, sensibly utilizing and respectfully appreciating our territory's natural heritage.

We need to set investment criteria and energy priorities for the territory so we can reduce and eliminate subsidy for diesel-powered generation. This is a subsidy that neither our residents nor the government can afford to maintain for much longer.

We will soon see the outcomes of the recent Paris COP21 Conference, and with that we will need to be leaders in lessening our dependency on diesel-fired electricity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase generation reliability, and expand cleaner, greener sources, including wind, solar, hydro turbine, and more co-generation within industry and GNWT-owned facilities, all of which will improve the environment and the health of Northerners.

I would like to talk about seniors as a priority for this government. I believe seniors have a pivotal place in shaping our future. Seniors are engaged in their communities like never before, yet too often their voices are not heard when it comes to shaping government policy. I believe that government must tap into the wisdom, experience and know-how of our territory's elder citizens. I am committed to supporting seniors and encouraging them to contribute to the energy and spirit of the vibrancy of our territory.

We need to ensure that the extended health care benefits remain and that appropriate reviews are made so inflationary costs for medical services are adjusted for accordingly. We need to prioritize development of quality, affordable long-term care facilities which will allow couples to stay together when they require a higher level of care. We need to work to provide seniors activity centres with stable, long-term funding and help address rising operating maintenance costs. We need to develop

a senior-specific home renovation and financing program that will allow seniors to live longer in their own homes, putting less burden on the need for more independent living units and long-term care living facilities.

I would like to talk about Aboriginal partnerships and relations as a priority for this government. I believe the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people has a way to go before true reconciliation for both sides can be had. Trust and honesty are there but have to be reaffirmed through new partnerships, open communication, dedication and commitment to restoring Aboriginal pride, dignity, art and culture, language and, of course, land. We must be steadfast and work collectively toward advancement in completion of the remaining land claims and self-government agreements.

We need to support the territorial government's position to take action on the recommendations outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation final report. We must work to advance Aboriginal employment through support of Aboriginal investment and business ownership opportunities. We need to support the federal government's recent commitment for the inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women. As we heard most recently from Aboriginal leaders from all the First Nations within the territory, there needs to be a high priority on the provision of adequate and suitable housing, early childhood and family support, healthy living, and diversified education programs, including on-the-land programs.

These are the priorities that residents of Yellowknife North and Northerners alike have shared with me over the past number of weeks and months. I am grateful to have had this opportunity to share these comments today, and I look forward to working with all Members of the Assembly and using the words that we have heard here today in developing our forthcoming mandate and making our already great territory even greater. Thank you, Members, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Last, but by no means least, Mr. Bob McLeod, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Yellowknife South. Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Bob McLeod's Speech

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What we have heard here today is that the challenges and issues facing the Northwest Territories and its residents are plentiful. However, there are five key areas that I believe we need to focus on as a government over the next four years: growing and diversifying the economy, keeping money in residents' pockets, dealing with social issues, addressing climate change, getting northern governance right.

The one theme these priorities have in common is health; healthy economy, healthy residents and a healthy environment. These priorities focus on a number of areas that require our attention as we move forward as the 18th Assembly, and if addressed can have impacts immediately in the short term and for the long-term future of our people.

Growing and diversifying the economy. The Northwest Territories' economy was severely affected by the global economic and financial crisis in 2008, and not all aspects have returned to pre-recession levels. The Northwest Territories economic outlook over the next five years is mixed at best. Although some regions are benefitting from resource projects, economic activity in other areas has either slowed considerably or declined. Over the next five to 15 years, the data suggests a protracted decline in resource production. Existing diamond mines are maturing and identified potential mining operations will not replace the economic activity of current operations. Resource exploration, which is necessary for further development, is also slowing down. We need to move forward in a bold fashion.

Growing the Northwest Territories economy requires transformational investments such as the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, and addressing our energy costs and supply challenges. These strategic investments and other initiatives to lower costs for residents and businesses are vital for the long-term growth and sustainability of the Northwest Territories economy. Whether it is big projects like the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway or small-scale projects, communities will benefit from these investments through jobs and contracts for local businesses. It is important we remember that while small projects in larger communities may not have a significant impact on the local economy, smaller communities will see great benefit.

The 18th Legislative Assembly must invest in infrastructure needed to open our territory to exploration and transport our vast resources to the market that, in turn, will provide jobs and attract new residents to live in our communities. For this reason, we must pursue new infrastructure investment through closed partnerships with Aboriginal governments and the Government of Canada. Access to the Northwest Territories vast resource wealth and resulting economic development is hampered by the lack of all-weather roads connecting the territory, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, Tlicho all-weather road or the Slave Geologic Province overland route. These projects will help open up all of the territory for business and allow for more cost-effective exploration and development.

Our efforts must be focused responsibly on those investments most likely to yield positive results for our economy and sustainable jobs for our residents. We need to reduce the risk of putting all our eggs in one basket. Skill development, diversification and improving conditions for entrepreneurship and capital investment must continue if we are to meet our goal of increasing the Northwest Territories population, which both builds our economy and improves the Government of the Northwest Territories' revenue.

The Government of the Northwest Territories needs to look at its own procurement and contracting practices to make sure we are supporting the use of made-in-the-Northwest Territories products and a development of a strong, northern manufacturing sector. Population growth benefits the economy, leading to more demand for goods and services and, therefore, supporting overall business activity. Increased economic activity means more employment opportunities. People have said they want a more accountable government and how government spends public money is one of the most important measures of accountability there is. It is important to the future health of the Northwest Territories to spend within our means and maximize the spending we do by prioritizing where we make strategic investments, but we have to make sure that this is done in the context of the fiscal reality that we face.

We have heard that the Government of the Northwest Territories' revenue outlook for the next few years is flat. It would not be responsible for us to spend money that we do not have, and we will have to work together collectively to make decisions about how we bring government expenditures in line with our revenues and each take responsibility for explaining our decisions to the people of the Northwest Territories. Keeping money in residents' pockets, the high and increased cost of living is a threat to our individual and collective well-being. Whether it is the price of a litre of milk in Colville Lake, an entry-level home in Yellowknife, or a kilowatt hour of electricity in Hay River, every resident, business and community is impacted by the cost of living in the Northwest Territories. It is also an impediment to attracting new residents to the Northwest Territories and is a significant factor for those who leave. We need to pursue opportunities to lower the cost of electricity generation and distribution in all our communities.

For the electricity system, value-added improvements would enhance the environmental performance and reliability of the system. However, these improvements usually require government subsidies if the goal is to maintain or reduce existing electricity rates. For example, improvements include renewable energy projects, hydro development and transformative projects

such as long-distance transmission infrastructure. We must work closely with the federal government to develop a new funding partnership for public housing and improve the effectiveness of existing programs to lower the cost of basic food items in our smallest and most remote communities. Although the Northwest Territories has an electricity system that meets the needs of residents, opportunities are available that would make the system more resilient, accessible and environmentally friendly. It is time we stop studying the possibilities and start acting on the work that the previous government has done on the Northwest Territories electricity system.

Improvements to the cost of power would not be viable without government intervention and subsidies. It is critical for this government to make strategic investments to help bring new options of power generation to our residents at the territorial and community levels and empower them to improve their personal situations.

With a new federal government in power for the first time in a decade and a renewed focus on infrastructure and energy spending, the Government of the Northwest Territories is well positioned to lobby access to funds to pursue infrastructure and energy projects that will not only benefit the economic prosperity of the territory but also improve the quality of life for residents.

Social issues and the future of the Northwest Territories. The social issues that have plagued the Northwest Territories for too long – suicide, addictions, family violence and incarceration – are significantly higher in the Northwest Territories than in most other jurisdictions in Canada. The devastating results are suffered disproportionately by Aboriginal people but felt in the homes and on the streets of every one of our communities.

The consequences for our society include low school attendance and graduation rates, unemployment, poor health and ultimately a quality of life below Canadian standards. This persistent and devastating cycle drives up the costs of social programs and law enforcement, causes a drag on our economy, lowers revenues and, thus, lessens resources available to meet other priorities. We need targeted policies and programs that will, over time, improve early childhood development, school attendance rates and education attainment, improve mental health and lower rates of addictions.

We also need to do more for our seniors in the areas of care and housing. Through the Government of the Northwest Territories' response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report that recently announced an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women, and the many other efforts already in place to improve the lives of

our residents, we can truly bring about the necessary changes for those who need it most. This should be done, in part, through improved system governance, program improvements and efficiencies, actions to reduce poverty, and investments in technologies for health and education. The future of the territory depends on a vibrant and empowered population. We can make this a reality.

As Northerners, we are on the front lines of climate change and it is not a comfortable place to be. Over the weekend, world leaders endorsed an ambitious agreement on climate change in Paris. This is good news, and the Northwest Territories will continue to mitigate the effects of climate change with the global community.

It was interesting to note that challenges facing emergency economies were recognized. One hundred billion dollars a year between 2025 and 2030 was committed to help developing nations transition to cleaner energy. It is important to note that for the Northwest Territories, our reality is that we are dependent on fossil fuels. We can and have begun transitioning to cleaner fuels and alternative energy. This will not happen overnight and we will have to balance our residents' ability to pay for renewable and alternative energy with a need to reduce the impacts of climate change.

Climate change is a serious concern. It is disrupting the global environment, affecting everyone, including, and very specifically, Northerners. Thawing permafrost and coastal erosion have become common problems affecting transportation infrastructure, water quality and causing the draining of our lakes. Such impacts bring heavy costs both directly and indirectly, many of which are only partially reflected in annual budgets. The impacts of climate change are more likely to increase than subside. The people of the Northwest Territories are expecting leadership from all of us and making sure the Government of the Northwest Territories does its part to implement the Paris Accord. Working together, I believe we can take up that challenge, and I believe it should be one of our priorities.

Getting northern governance right, we need to be committed to finalizing and implementing land and resource agreements across the Northwest Territories. Negotiations on land claims, self-government and land use plans have dragged on for too many years I believe that a clear political statement from this Assembly supported by a renewed approach to outstanding negotiations including the Joint Oversight Committee of Cabinet and Regular MLAs will send a message that we are committed to creating a strong territory in collaboration with our Aboriginal government partners.

I believe that the style of negotiations needs to be changed. The old way was far too adversarial, has taken far too long and is costing far too much in time, energy and money. That is why interest-based negotiations would benefit all parties. Mandates need to be flexible and respect that each of the Aboriginal governments are faced with different circumstances, and in many cases, the challenges they face are unique to their people and their region. It is time to focus more on collaboration and partnerships, and that means changing the way we interact with our Aboriginal government partners.

I will wrap up by saying settling land and resource agreements, completing self-government agreements and land use plans are necessary and the right thing to do. We have a great task ahead of us. Setting priorities for the next four years is a challenging task. However, with a collective and collaborative approach, I truly believe we will accomplish great things for the Northwest Territories and the people we represent. Thank you very much.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I want to thank all Members for taking the time to put a lot of thought into your statements and for delivering them within the time limits you had established for yourselves.

I want to thank all Members in the public gallery who are here today to observe the proceedings, as well as those who are watching at home

We will reconvene in this room next at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning for the Territorial Leadership Committee meetings where we will select the Premier, Speaker and Members of the Executive Council.

Members, we are adjourned.

---ADJOURNMENT