

**Mandate Successes – Developing our Natural Resources**

Mr. Speaker, our government has committed in its mandate to supporting exploration and the mining sector. It is the lifeblood of our economy. Our people and businesses are innovative, self-sufficient and resilient, and want to do their part to contribute to a strong Northwest Territories. We need the kind of well-paying, long term jobs that come with sustainable economic development, and our government is working towards economic self-determination for all NWT residents.

Our strategic approach to unlocking the potential of responsible mining and exploration in the NWT is defined in our Mineral Development Strategy. We committed in our mandate to its implementation and, Mr. Speaker, we are making progress.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has a vision of a strong, prosperous territory that provides opportunities for all our communities and regions. Sustainable, responsible development of our natural resources is a significant part of realizing that vision, and strengthening our economy through the responsible development of these resources will allow us to reach our full potential.

Today, I'd like to highlight how we have met and surpassed a number of important milestones to helping us reach that full potential.

In the first two years of our mandate, we have invested approximately \$3.4 million in support for geoscience, marketing, Aboriginal capacity building, and our ongoing annual funding for the Mining Incentive Program.

Mr. Speaker, while mining is the foundation of our economy, geoscience is the foundation of mining. Later today I will be tabling the recently-released five-year strategic plan for the NWT Geological Survey. It is the guide by which this important Division of our government will continue to provide the geoscience data behind the responsible development of our mineral and energy resources.

Last Friday, we officially opened the doors to our Northwest Territories' Geological Materials Storage Facility. The completion of this facility is one that was recommended by our Mineral Development Strategy. It is a resource that has the potential to advance mining projects and increase development in our resource sector.

Elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, we have responded to the needs in our marketplace by implementing, and extending, incentives for exploration. This includes our Work Credits Program which we extended by two years. The implementation of the Mining Incentive Program, is a direct investment by our government in the future of exploration in the NWT. Not only did we implement this program Mr. Speaker, we more-than doubled it.

Meanwhile, we have worked to close the skills gap by partnering with the Mine Training Society and other stakeholders to offer training programs targeted to meet demand within the mining industry. This includes new surface mining and prospecting courses to build capacity within our local workforce.

Our mandate commitment also includes supporting Aboriginal governments looking to benefit from mining. That's why we have established the Client Service and Community Relations Unit, in part, to support Aboriginal governments as they build their capacity to deal with mining related activities. This unit was instrumental in facilitating the attendance of Indigenous government representatives at last year's Round Up event in Vancouver, and in the work that we have supported to advance a regional mineral development strategy for the Dehcho.

In June we introduced the Resources and Energy Development Information Project to connect NWT residents with the information they need to understand what energy and non-renewable resources exist in the NWT; what is entailed in their development, and the benefits that can be realized from their development.

Mr. Speaker, a related commitment in our mandate is the development of the Northwest Territories' first-ever Mineral Resources Act. We are moving forward on an aggressive timeline to see that our territory's unique needs are reflected in our legislation before this Legislative Assembly dissolves.

We are engaging Indigenous governments and organizations, stakeholders, and all NWT residents to inform the development of this Act. We've visited seven communities, held focus-group sessions with stakeholders, and had meetings with representatives from both public and Indigenous governments. We will continue to take meetings, collect input from our new interactive engagement portal, and take phone calls, emails, and mail comments until December 1.

While mining and exploration are the bulk of our natural resource sector, we also committed in our mandate to delivering an oil and gas strategy for the NWT.

A draft strategy – and proposed implementation plan - is now complete. It offers a viable, balanced and made-in-the-NWT approach to advancing oil and gas development in the NWT and positioning our territory to realize economic benefits that this sector may offer.

As our government's work on energy and climate change moves forward, there is also a need to re-consider our Oil and Gas Strategy in the context of our government's emerging vision for greater energy security. So while work on our Oil and Gas Strategy is largely complete, we need to ensure that it is consistent with other GNWT strategies, including the Energy Strategy and upcoming Climate Change Strategic Framework. For this reason we are delaying the delivery of a final Oil and Gas Strategy and action plan until later on in our government.

Mr. Speaker, much work has been completed. Of course, there is also much more to do over the next two years. We are committed to continuing to push initiatives which will strengthen our foundation of natural resources for a resilient, sustainable economic future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.