

The Honourable Bob McLeod
Premier

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Achievements of the 18th Assembly

Mr. Speaker, as the 18th Legislative Assembly comes to an end, now is a good time for us to look back at the past four years and the good work we have done together for the people of the Northwest Territories.

The 18th Assembly has been the first full Assembly since the federal government devolved responsibility for public lands, resources and waters to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Devolution significantly increased the responsibilities of the Government of the Northwest Territories and expanded the areas in which this Legislative Assembly has legal authority.

At the time of devolution, the 17th Legislative Assembly mirrored existing federal legislation, making the decision to first devolve and then evolve. It fell to the 18th Assembly to do the heavy lifting on the “evolve” part of the equation.

Devolution was just the beginning, Mr. Speaker. It was this Assembly that had to do the hard work of understanding our residents’ priorities for newly devolved authorities and turn them into sound legislation and policy to reflect Northern views and aspirations.

I am pleased to say that we were up to the task. The first made-in-the Northwest Territories *Mineral Resources Act* will receive Assent today, setting out for the first time ever how the Government of the Northwest Territories will manage the rich reserves of mineral resources we share, in line with the views and priorities of northern decision makers. We have also amended the *Petroleum Resources Act* and the *Oil and Gas Operations Act* to take into account our new responsibilities and reflect Northerners’ priorities.

Part of managing the land and resources of the Northwest Territories responsibly includes making our own decisions about how land will be protected and conserved. A new *Protected Areas Act* passed this past June now gives Northerners the legal tools for creating a network of permanent protected areas that conserve the ecological and cultural worth of the Northwest Territories’ most valued places.

We have updated and modernized the *Environmental Rights Act*, establishing the requirement for government departments and certain public bodies to consider a statement of environmental values in their decision making, and mandating a State of the Environment Report.

We have passed a new *Public Land Act*, bringing together two previously separate regimes for managing public land in the Northwest Territories and setting the stage for further development of a more unified approach to land management.

Work to strengthen and improve the GNWT's approach to managing land and resources will continue, Mr. Speaker, including work on the Waters Act and the Forest Act, but the work we have done in four short years to establish a new made-in-the-North legislative regime for land and resource management is an accomplishment we should all be proud of.

Another priority for Northerners, Mr. Speaker, was improving government openness and transparency, and our government has responded. During this term, this Assembly passed the *Ombud Act* and appointed the first ever Ombud for the Northwest Territories.

Following a comprehensive review undertaken by the Government of the Northwest Territories, this Assembly also made significant amendments to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

We have complemented this legislative work with the creation of our government's first-ever *Open Government Policy*, including a new guide to public engagement that will help ensure we are taking a consistent approach to soliciting the views of the public on important matters of public policy and factoring those into our work.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked together to pass several important pieces of legislation to protect public health and safety, including the *Northwest Territories 9-1-1 Act*, which will provide for a territory-wide 9-1-1 service beginning this fall. We also passed a new *Emergency Management Act*.

Responding to legislative changes at the federal level, Mr. Speaker, we passed the *Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act*. We have also passed new legislation to control and reduce smoking, and legislation to control the sale of tobacco and vapour products.

Mr. Speaker. In all, we have considered 93 bills – including money bills – over the past four years, representing a significant amount of work.

Over these four years, the Government of the Northwest Territories has also invested in initiatives meant to advance the priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly and better serve the people of the territory.

Together, we have invested more than \$82 million dollars in health, wellness and education initiatives, including \$33.5 million in health services, \$17 million in children's programs, nearly \$11 million in long-term care and seniors and \$6 million in shelters and vulnerable populations.

We have invested \$29 million dollars in community operations and safety, including \$12 million in housing, \$7.5 million to address the cost of living, \$5 million for community government operations and \$2 million for 9-1-1.

We have invested \$22 million dollars in climate change and another \$5 million in the environment, Mr. Speaker.

We have also invested more than \$42 million dollars in the economy and labour market, including \$14 million in the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Line, nearly \$12 million in adult education and training, \$5 million in economic diversification and \$3 million in tourism and parks.

We have also invested more than \$19 million in government services, including \$3 million in service delivery improvements, almost \$2 million in cannabis implementation, \$2 million in intergovernmental relations and \$1.5 million in devolution implementation.

We have also invested millions in literally building the Northwest Territories during this term of government, Mr. Speaker, including our biggest ever capital plan in the current fiscal year.

Over the past four years, we have invested over \$155 million dollars in the new Stanton Territorial Hospital, and another \$92 million in other health facilities in communities around the Northwest Territories.

We have invested \$44 million dollars in schools and \$88.5 million in Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Capital. We have invested over \$112 million in community capital through our community government capital formula funding.

During this Assembly, in addition to the Stanton Territorial Hospital, the Government of the Northwest Territories celebrated the completion of two other major capital projects: the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway, and the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Line.

Looking to the future, we have invested almost \$114 million in the Tlicho All-Season Road, and \$142 million in other road projects under the Building Canada Fund. With the planning and permitting work now complete, I am pleased to note that Minister Schumann will be hosting an official groundbreaking ceremony in Whati tomorrow with representatives from the Tlicho Government and a number of MLAs and Ministers to mark the start of work on the Tlicho All-Season Road.

We are also advancing energy, transportation and other infrastructure projects in partnership with the federal government through the Investing in Canada Plan and the National Trades Corridor Fund.

We continue to advance the Mackenzie Valley Highway, Mr. Speaker, as well as the Slave Geological Province Corridor, two important roads to resources that will help unlock our territory's potential, and create jobs and economic opportunities for our residents and all Canadians.

Our government has also made substantial investments in energy during the life of this Assembly, addressing multiple priorities including economic development, cost of living and environment and climate change.

This includes projects like a 40 kilowatt solar project in Tulita and the Inuvik Wind Project. We have secured federal funding for a new and more efficient generator in Sachs Harbour, and for upgrades to the Snare Forks hydroelectric facility.

We continue to collect wind data in Norman Wells, Sachs Harbour and Snare Rapids, and are monitoring water flows in Gameti to assess the potential for a mini-hydro project.

We continue to work with the federal government to advance the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project, Mr. Speaker, and have secured \$2 million dollars in funding already, with a commitment for a further \$18 million over the next three years.

These efforts have been guided by our government's integrated approach to addressing energy and climate change that was announced in May 2018 with the release of our *2030 Energy Strategy, Climate Change Strategic Framework, and Petroleum Resources Strategy*.

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that Northerners care deeply about the land, environment and wildlife, Mr. Speaker, and we have worked throughout this Assembly to reflect that concern in our actions and decisions.

Earlier this week, our government was part of the celebrations in Lutselk'e to announce the creation of Thaidene Nene with the Government of Canada, Lutselk'e Dene First Nation, Deninu Kue First Nation and NWT Metis Nation. The new national and territorial parks that will be established on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake represent the culmination of a 50-year dream for the people of the region that our government was pleased to be a part of.

We have also continued to take steps to manage and protect wildlife in the Northwest Territories, including the implementation of significant new regulations under the Wildlife Act, and the creation of a Boreal Caribou Recovery Strategy, a Bathurst Caribou Range Plan and a Boreal Caribou Range Plan.

We also recognize that a strong territory starts with strong people, Mr. Speaker, and we have continued to support healthy, educated people over the four years of this Assembly.

During this Assembly, the Government of the Northwest Territories undertook a comprehensive analysis of labour market needs and launched the Skills 4 Success initiative to improve employment success for Northwest Territories residents, close skill gaps for in-demand jobs, and more effectively respond to employer and industry needs.

We completed the Aurora College Foundational Review and have responded with a plan to create the first polytechnic university in the Northwest Territories, built around our existing campus communities and community learning centres that will create new and expanded post-secondary educational opportunities for our people. We continue to invest in the College, including with a \$10 million dollar Centre for Mine and Industry Training we opened in Fort Smith at the beginning of this year.

We have completed the roll-out of free, optional junior kindergarten to all communities during the life of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, giving Northwest Territories families more options and flexibility and giving our kids the support they need to grow and develop right from the start.

Our government has also launched a new community-based child and youth care counsellor initiative, Mr. Speaker, aimed to provide critical mental health supports and counselling at the community level.

We have invested in a new long-term care addition for Woodland Manor in Hay River, a new health centre and long-term care facility in Norman Wells, a new health centre in Fort Resolution and the Jimmy Erasmus Seniors' Home in Behchoko.

During this Assembly, the Government of the Northwest Territories has also completed a significant transformation in the way that health services are delivered and managed with the creation of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. The new authority has helped to break down systemic barriers to efficient and effective care and service delivery and built the foundation for a system with improved accountability and performance, informed by regional wellness councils.

We also understand that we must meet people where they are at, focusing on the needs of the individual, not our systems and processes. That is why our government has introduced a cultural safety action plan for our health system, to create an environment free of racism and discrimination where people from all cultures and identities feel safe.

It is also why we have embarked on a new primary care reform initiative that will ensure our health system is based around the needs of the patient and their families, focusing on outcomes for our people.

We continue to invest in justice in our communities, Mr. Speaker, including a new women's correction facility that will be opening in Fort Smith at the end of this month. This brand new facility has been designed to provide female offenders with culturally appropriate programs and activities meant to help them become productive, healthy members of their communities.

To support safe communities, our government has agreed to construct 45 staff housing units at the request of the RCMP in five communities, including Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik and Norman Wells.

Our government has also continued to address the critical need for housing in the Northwest Territories, including convening the first ever Northern Housing Summit in Inuvik earlier this year and successfully negotiating for \$36 million dollars under the National Housing Strategy and a \$60 million carve-out under the National Housing Co-investment Fund.

Earlier this month the Government of the Northwest Territories opened a new seniors nine-plex in Fort McPherson and a 17-unit singles building in Inuvik. We have invested in supportive housing project in Fort Simpson, Behchoko, Aklavik and Fort Good Hope under our Northern Pathways to Housing program. We partnered with the Salt River First Nation to open two housing units and also partnered with the Centre for Northern Families to open eight semi-independent units for people who are experiencing homelessness in Yellowknife.

We know homelessness is a challenge across the territory, Mr. Speaker, and each year the GNWT works across departments and with many different services providers in communities all across the North to provide programs, services and funding intended to support community members who may be experiencing homelessness, or other related challenges. We continue to work on this issue through

innovative approaches like housing first, integrated case management and the Homelessness Assistance Fund. We have increased resources to address this issue, including the new combined Sobering Centre and Day Shelter in Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, today is Day 90 of our sitting days in this Third Session. Session is a major focus for the public and for us as Members, but we need to remember that government is a 365-day a year business. We have accomplished a lot since the First Session of the 18th Assembly took place on December 17, 2015. We should be proud of our accomplishments as an Assembly.

I want to thank Members who have worked with us on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories, and I want to thank hard-working members of the public service who have supported us in turning our priorities into plans, policies, programs and services for our residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.