



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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**19<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

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**ROUND TABLE**

**Wednesday, October 9, 2019**

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# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

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**Mr. Frederick Blake Jr.**  
(Mackenzie Delta)

**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**  
(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**  
(Kam Lake)

**Ms. Paulie Chinna**  
(Sahtu)

**Ms. Caroline Cochrane**  
(Range Lake)

**Ms. Julie Green**  
(Yellowknife Centre)

**Mr. Jackie Jacobson**  
(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**  
(Yellowknife North)

**Mr. Jackson Lafferty**  
(Monfwi)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**  
(Thebacha)

**Ms. Katrina Nokleby**  
(Great Slave)

**Mr. Steve Norn**  
(Tu Nedhe-Willideh)

**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**  
(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**  
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. R.J. Simpson**  
(Hay River North)

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**  
(Hay River South)

**Ms. Diane Thom**  
(Inuvik Boot Lake)

**Mr. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)

**Ms. Caroline Wawzonek**  
(Yellowknife South)

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**Clerk of the Legislative Assembly**  
Mr. Tim Mercer

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Mr. Glen Rutland	Mr. Michael Ball	Ms. Jennifer Franki-Smith	Ms. Cynthia James	Ms. Sheila MacPherson Ms. Alyssa Holland

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, October 9, 2019****Members Present**

Mr. Blake, Mr Bonnetrouge, Ms. Cleveland, Ms. Cochrane, Ms Green, Mr Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Mr. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Ms. Thom, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Wawzonek

**Call to Order**

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Good morning, Members-elect. We will begin our proceedings today with a prayer, and I will call upon Mr. Blake, please, to lead us in prayer.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

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

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Good morning, Members-elect. My name is Tim Mercer. I am the Clerk of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, and until such time as you have elected a speaker it falls upon me to preside over your deliberations today and until the 25<sup>th</sup> of October.

I am joined at the table today by Deputy Clerk Glen Rutland, to my right, and Deputy Clerk Kim Wickens, to my left. On behalf of the staff of the Legislative Assembly, I want to take this opportunity to formally congratulate each of you on your recent election to the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

This is an historic gathering. For the first time in the history of the Northwest Territories, and indeed the history of our country, the residents of the Northwest Territories have elected a gender-balanced Legislative Assembly.

The United Nations have identified 30 percent as the critical threshold of representation for women to have a significant and lasting impact on the policy decisions and outcomes of government. The 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly set a goal of achieving this 30 percent threshold by 2027. As a result of your efforts, we have broken through and surpassed that threshold eight years ahead of schedule.

---Applause

One of the fundamental aspects of consensus government is that all 19 Members, regardless of the positions they eventually hold in this place, have a meaningful and active role to play in setting

the priorities for an incoming Legislative Assembly. Of course, this doesn't mean that all of your individual priorities will ultimately form part of the overall priorities of the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly. After all, priorities are about making tough choices, but each of you has an equal role to play in determining what those priorities will ultimately be.

Today is the second step in the priority-setting process. The first step, of course, was the election campaign that each of you has successfully come through. Today is the time to speak not only to your future constituents, but also to your new colleagues in the Legislative Assembly and, indeed, all of the people of the Northwest Territories.

The next step in the priority-setting process will be a public meeting of northern Indigenous and community government leaders, to be held at the Tree of Peace Friendship Centre in Yellowknife on October 17<sup>th</sup>.

According to the schedule you adopted yesterday, your priorities will be released to the public on your first formal sitting day, October 25, 2019. Once established, it will fall to the newly appointed Cabinet to build a mandate or an action plan to implement these priorities over the next four years and beyond.

Members-elect, the questions that you have been asked to speak to today are as follows: where would you like to see the Northwest Territories at the end of your four-year term? Where would you like to see it in 10 years? What specific actions do you feel the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly should take to achieve this vision?

Today's meeting is open to the public and is being broadcast on the Legislative Assembly television network, as well as on various social media outlets. Your proceedings will be interpreted into the following languages:

- On channel 2, the Tlicho language;
- On channel 3, Chipewyan;
- On channel 4, South Slavey;
- On channel 5, North Slavey;

- On Channel 6, Inuvialuktun;
- On channel 7, Inuktitut; and
- On channel 8, French.

To listen in English, please leave your headsets set to channel 1.

You have agreed to limit your speeches today to 15 minutes. There is no need to use all of this time, and I will not interrupt you if you go beyond the 15 minutes. However, I do ask that you be mindful of the number of Members who wish to speak today and the limited time available to us.

I would ask that, when you deliver your speeches, you please stand.

We will take a break at about 10:30 a.m. this morning and break again for lunch at noon, resuming at 1:00 p.m. I expect we will be finished by no later than 4:00 p.m. today.

Members, we have Pages in the Chamber today to assist you with delivering messages to one another, transferring documents, and, if you need your water glasses refilled, they will assist you with that, as well.

You have agreed to make your presentations today in alphabetical order by constituency name. This means that we will commence with the Member-elect for Deh Cho, Mr. Bonnetrouge. Following Mr. Bonnetrouge, we will go in alphabetical order by constituency name, but we may need to jump around a little bit, as certain Members need to be away from the Chamber today to attend a judicial recount that is taking place off-site.

Thank you, Members-elect. We are now ready to proceed. Mr. Bonnetrouge, the floor is yours.

### Round Table Speeches by Members

#### MR. RONALD BONNETROUGE'S SPEECH

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Good morning to all my fellow Members and to the legislative staff and to the Pages also. Let me first congratulate all MLA-elect Members of this Assembly, and I look forward to a unified and collaborative approach to governing the Northwest Territories for the next four years.

To my Deh Cho riding constituents, a huge mahsi cho for instilling your trust in me to be your Member of the Legislative Assembly for the next four years. A big mahsi cho to my partner and family for your unwavering support during the campaign period. It was a tough road, and I am forever grateful to set a course for the future of my grandchildren and future generations.

Regarding the GNWT-Indigenous relationships, I want to share with you a vision, a vision of meaningful dialogue and continuous collaboration with all the Indigenous groups of the Northwest Territories to chart the future of the territory for economic prosperity. Only with these partnerships will we realize the prosperity required to build a strong workforce that creates self-esteem and self-sufficiency for all the people of the Northwest Territories. One of the ways is to settle any and all outstanding land claims in the Northwest Territories and not make this task unachievable and unrealistic. We have to remember we are on Indigenous territory. The new government of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly can create this path by harnessing and developing this vision. All governments in Canada and around the world will be watching with envy this precedent-setting vision. This is the vision I have, and I encourage my colleagues to make steps to this goal within the life of this Assembly. Mahsi.

Regarding education reform, reform is introducing a better method or course of action. As leaders, we have always stated that education is important so we can have the good education and skills to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, and such. That has always been the dream of our small communities. Sadly, for a majority of those students, that is unachievable. It is so disheartening to see the sad look on the faces of the students who cannot aspire to meet their goals and dreams for higher education. Even for the basic trades entrance exams, our students cannot meet the basic requirements. I believe as leaders, parents, teachers, and the government as a whole, we are failing to discuss the educational requirements that are required of our students to attain higher education and to at least meet some of their expectations to advance to post-secondary institutions.

How is this reform achievable? We need to review how the three R's are being delivered at the early ages. This may require going into the small communities to discuss with the educators, students, district education authorities, and the community. I would also like this to be completed during the life of this Assembly.

Healthcare. During my door-to-door interactions with Indigenous people, I am constantly being reminded of the second-class treatment they receive at the hands of healthcare professionals, whether they be doctors or nurses. Perhaps it is not only the Indigenous people, but they are the most prevalent group, as most of our people are submissive and passive and do not question authority. This may stem from the residential school era and syndrome. Far too often, they hear comments such as, "You are treaty, so you get your medication and care for free." Those are the

comments that people are getting, and this is a highly inappropriate statement to be made by a healthcare professional.

Also, the constant misdiagnosis of patients is also prevalent in our small communities. Patients have been going to the health centres for the same ailment at least three to four times and are sent home with pills to ease the pain. People have had near-death experiences because of this situation and are devastated when their diagnosis becomes unbearably painful. What should be happening is, if a diagnosis is not known, then they should be sent out to see a specialist, and most times this is in Edmonton. I would like to see us as the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly fix this situation before more of our people become casualties of continued misdiagnosis.

Housing. The NWT Housing Corporation's mandate is to administer and provide affordable housing to First Nations of the Northwest Territories, including rental housing. The federal government had a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations to provide free housing. I believe the onus is now on the GNWT to provide that free housing to First Nations, as this responsibility has now been devolved to the GNWT. I would like this to be on the agenda for upcoming leadership meetings with Indigenous governments for discussion and possible solutions. Mahsi.

I also note that the NWT Housing Corporation's current rent scale is set and determined from a tenant's last year's tax return amount. Tenants are now being coerced into signing over their Canada Revenue Agency tax return to the NWT Housing Corporation, and you have to do that in order to get into a unit. Isn't this barbaric and against a person's basic human rights, not to mention the loss of dignity and self-esteem? How do we allow this as a government in this day and age? Surely, a corporation such as the NWT Housing Corporation can set basic rent scales without the intrusion of people's basic human rights to privacy of tax returns. Let's have a review to set that right. Mahsi.

Traditional economy initiatives. Northern-grown produce to combat the high cost of living and supplementing traditional foods. The GNWT needs to look at traditional economies to increase employment and produce northern products and foods. I believe the federal and territorial governments give tax exemptions to mining companies until the amount of their investment is forgiven. They are also given a low tax rate; I believe it could be as low as 5 percent. They say mines create employment, but most mine employees are not Northerners. Why can't the GNWT put some of those exemptions into non-renewable resources like food production?

The federal government has the Nutrition North subsidy program to subsidize retailers to bring healthy, nutritious foods at a high cost of transporting into the communities, thanks to the carbon tax. We are hearing that the program isn't working as it should. Why can't the GNWT develop a plan to have northern-harvested food products sold in the northern stores? This will create jobs, cut transportation costs, and provide healthy northern foods. The GNWT can look into developing a subsidy program to subsidize harvesters to produce northern foods. This will help all Northerners, and maybe we can even export the northern-produced foods. Mahsi.

In closing, I again congratulate all the Members and look forward to our collaborative approach to governing the Northwest Territories for the next four years. Mahsi cho.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Mr. Bonnetrouge. I will next call upon the Member-elect for Great Slave, Ms. Nokleby.

#### MS. KATRINA NOKLEBY'S SPEECH

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you. Thank you very much for having me here today. I would like to thank the residents of Great Slave for electing me and putting their faith in me for the next four years.

I first wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the efforts of several groups and several individuals who have made it possible for myself to be here today, particularly the Status of Women, my predecessors who have gone ahead of me, who made sure that there was encouragement and workshops and words of advice so that those of us who were considering this as an option pulled the trigger and made the decision to run. I wouldn't be here without any of them, and they need to know that this just didn't happen overnight. It was the culmination of years and years of efforts and hard work by many individuals. I also want to thank the allies, the males who supported us in getting us here.

There is nothing like putting us on the spot, day two, to be televised for my first-ever speech to be made in the House, so I will say I am a little bit nervous. You will have to forgive me for that.

Obviously, while I ran, one of the major planks of my platform was the economy. That is not to say that I don't believe that social issues and other issues that are facing the GNWT are important. However, that being said, if we don't have any money to pay for anything, we aren't going to be going anywhere as a territory.

We all know the diamond mines are set to close within the next decade, and we need to work our

best to expand the life of those mines to ensure that we continue to have an economy to work on while we build our sustainable diverse economy parallel to the diamond mining or the resource extraction industry. We need to stimulate our exploration sector by the completion of key infrastructure projects. For me, that includes the Slave Geologic corridor, the Taltson hydro expansion, the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

As we see climate change and climate uncertainty going forward, we are going to leave our communities stranded. If we don't start to build our all-weather road system and increase the reliability of our transportation system, we are going to be in trouble. I know there is a huge amount of security that comes from the ability to decide that you are allowed to leave. When that cost of leaving is \$2,000 to fly out, you are going to be in trouble.

I understand that roads can create issues. There is definitely an environmental impact for things like these infrastructure projects that I would like to be done. However, that being said, we can do work and we can build infrastructure in a sustainable manner, and we can do it with the best and highest of environmental standards and regulations. We have a great environmental regulatory system in Canada and in the Northwest Territories, so it is not realistic to say that we are not going to build anything going forward.

Our economy has been based on mining in the past, and it is what is continuing to feed our families at the moment. I would love to see more of an expansion of tourism. However, tourism jobs don't pay the same as mining jobs. At the end of the day, nobody wants to come back from a service job at the mine where they are making \$30 to \$40 an hour to work at a hotel in Yellowknife for \$14. This is a reality. I think this is something we have to face.

Another area where I think we need to be looking, as our mining sector is declining, is we need to be looking at our remediation reclamation sector. We need to be lobbying the federal government to ensure that the jobs that were recreated by the Giant Mine Remediation Project are staying in the Northwest Territories. Most of that work is being done by southern companies. As the construction management contractor said, no one up here has the capability of doing it. Well, my understanding was, five years ago, that job or that project was to create northern capacity and capabilities. To throw our hands up now and say that is not possible, I don't think it is fair. It is a billion-dollar cleanup. Why aren't we getting more of that pie?

Another area I would really like to see expansion or see development in the next four to 10 years is the Polytechnic University. I am not going to sit here and say it should be a revamping of Aurora

College. I have no idea in that area, and I would definitely want to become more informed in that. However, I do think that we have amazing permafrost scientists. We have amazing engineers. We have amazing geologists in the North. We should be utilizing those people, that talent, and leading the way in climate change research and permafrost science.

Yukon College is already in the process of transitioning to a university, so we need to be in the forefront of that education sector. We also need to be creating this northern infrastructure, so we are a player in the Arctic economy. Both Nunavut and the Yukon are booming. Both of them are set to have population increases. I believe Iqaluit is going to double in the next 10 years. They are building roads. They are building mines. They are building a road down into (inaudible). We need to build our roads to connect to that, because eventually there are going to be ports in the Arctic Ocean. If we can access those ports, that is going to help grow our economy a lot better.

One of the things that is also affecting our economy in the North is the uncertainty of the Northwest Territories. A huge factor in that is the unsettled land claims. It has also been the conduct of our government, as well. We are not seen to be a stable, reliable place to invest money. If they can go elsewhere where they don't have the cost of doing business like they do here, plus the uncertainty of not knowing where we are going to be in the next five years, we would have more investment in the North.

To do so, we do need to offer better infrastructure so that the mines can do business at a cheaper rate. I am not sure about the taxation issues that my colleague brought up, and I definitely need to think that we need to ensure that the mines are paying their fair share as they extract our resources and ensuring that those jobs do stay in the North for Northerners. However, I don't think it is realistic to say we aren't going to be mining in the next 10 to 20 years. We just need to ensure we are doing it right.

I have worked a lot in contaminated sites. I have worked at Giant Mine. I believe I have had some health issues as a result of working at Giant Mine. If there is anybody who does see the impacts of mining gone wrong, it is myself, and that is one of the reasons I am happy to be here, is because I do feel like I can offer that lens on what needs to be done so that we are doing it in the right manner.

As I went door-to-door, one of the key huge things for me, and it is not an area I was super exposed to in my profession, was the social issues facing Yellowknife, obviously, and as in the north as a Yellowknife-centric. Obviously, as I travelled around



to different communities, I see the poverty. We are a very, very "have" and "have not" territory, and this is really disturbing to me.

One of the things that I did hear at the door a lot of times, and not to diss the residents of Great Slave, however, there is a sense of disconnect, I think, between people in Yellowknife and what is actually happening in the rest of the territory. I would like to work hard to be a bridge towards showing the communities that we are not going to be a Yellowknife-centric government, that we are going to take care of everybody, because we are only as strong as our weakest community, and if we are having the issues that we are having in places outside of Yellowknife, then that hurts Yellowknife, as well. It is all a drain on our system, so we need to ensure that every person within the territory is healthy, that every person has the same opportunity to move forward.

Education is a big one. As engineers, we often talk: how do we get more northern and Aboriginal students to take engineering? The answer is: we don't know. We look at the education system, and I can't even fathom how a child from a community would make it into an engineering program somewhere in the south. That is another reason why I do think the polytechnic is a good way for us to go and continuing along with the trades programs that we already have and keeping those strong.

However, if we can have a program or something within the North that allows northern students to have that bridge where it makes it a lot easier for them to go to school where they are not all of a sudden -- I found myself as a child going and seeing Vancouver to go to university overwhelming, and I came from a city of about 130,000 people in the south. So for me to go to a big city was overwhelming. I cannot even imagine what it would be like to be a child from a community trying to go to Calgary or Vancouver for the first time at the age of 18. We are setting them up for failure. We have a two-tier system there, it appears to me. Again, it is not something that I would profess to have huge amounts of knowledge on; however, I think it is something that really does need to be addressed. We are failing a lot of people in our territory.

That being said, I think we have a lot of challenges ahead of us. As I went door-to-door, I recognized how little I actually know and how much I have to learn in order to do this job better. I am grateful for my colleagues here because I feel like already, even in one day, they have taught me a lot, and I know that I am going to continue to learn from all of you and grow. I already can feel that we have a collaborative group of people here. I truly believe we are all here for the right reasons. We all want to see things move forward in this territory. We have

been spinning our wheels, and I think that it is time for that to stop, and I am looking forward to being part of the solution. Thank you very much.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Ms. Nokleby. We are two speeches in, and we have left some time on the clock, so that is unusual for newly elected politicians and returning politicians. Maybe that is a sign of things to come. Again, I think it is just fair if you are not using the entire time.

One of the themes of transition this time around was to get started with the politics very, very early, so I do apologize to those who are feeling the pressure from making their first speech here today and only their second or, in some cases, their first day in the Legislature, but so far you are doing fantastic, and try not to be too nervous. In a few months, this will seem very comfortable and very old hat, so congratulations to both newly elected Members so far.

Next, I am going to call up the Member-elect for Yellowknife South, Mr. Rocky Simpson. Hay River South. My apologies. It is not the first time I have made that mistake, but hopefully the last.

#### MR. ROCKY SIMPSON'S SPEECH

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you. I am very pleased to be here today and would like to thank the residents of Hay River South for allowing me to represent them in this 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. I also look forward to working with all the elected Members both respectfully and cooperatively.

I think that we could maybe change things if we all get along and work to a common goal, which is to do the best for the people of the NWT. Prior to starting, I would just, I guess, like to bring attention to an accident that happened on Great Slave Lake, where there were four fishers lost, and I would just like to mention their names: Stacy Linington, Daniel Courtoreille, Michael Courtoreille, and Jason Fulton.

There have been ongoing searches over the last week and a half for the men, and I haven't talked to anybody today so I'm not sure where they are at with that, but I would just like to let them know and their families know that our prayers and our thoughts are with them. It is tragic, it happens, and the fishing industry is a tough industry.

As I went door-to-door, I think I knocked on about 400 doors and talked to many of the residents about issues that matter to them. A common theme appeared with respect to those issues.

The most common issue raised was access to healthcare in the community. Residents want that

issue addressed immediately. Residents are concerned with the routine absence or shortage of doctors. This has resulted in long wait times, and in some cases, to the detriment of the patients. It has resulted in patients being forced to travel south to seek timely medical services.

This shortage limits appointment opportunities, diagnosis of illnesses, and emergency care. Although this is a common issue throughout Canada, it should not prevent us from finding workable and long-term solutions to address it in both Hay River and the Northwest Territories. How we address it has more than likely been reviewed and discussed many times in this House. Therefore, what we now need is action. The Hay River Health Authority staff are second to none, but, without doctors, they are limited in services they can provide.

One option that was thrown out there is to amalgamate the Hay River Health Authority with the Territorial Health Authority, but there again, the Territorial Health Authority have their own set of issues, as well. Whatever the solution is, the staff of the Hay River Health Authority and the residents of Hay River must be engaged and have a say in the direction we need to take to address this issue.

Another item that came up was the economy. It is very important for South Slave, and I think the smaller communities down the valley. Yellowknife has the luxury of diamond mines and government infrastructure and bureaucracy to provide the long-term employment and business opportunities it needs. What Hay River needs, what the South Slave needs, and what the communities along the Mackenzie need is some form of economic diversification and some major infrastructure projects to ensure that there are employment and business opportunities to keep people employed.

Hay River is situated on the fringe of the opportunities enjoyed by Yellowknife. We have seen jobs moved to Yellowknife. We have seen contracts for infrastructure work go to southern firms while our local contractors sit on the sidelines and watch. Our northern workforce sits on the sideline unemployed. Our local suppliers watch as truckloads of material are brought from the south. Our suppliers of accommodations watch as numerous RV trailers roll in to job sites to avoid paying the local accommodations.

We need to look for opportunities in our community. We need to identify resources that we have immediate access to. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly, a number of strategies were developed; a fishing strategy, an agricultural strategy, and a manufacturing strategy were developed. We have to seriously look at those strategies in collaboration with the producers and identify how we can action

them to the benefit of the people not only in Hay River, but for the NWT as a whole.

Another area that is in our backyard is forestry. Due to land claims being unsettled, access to that industry is limited. However, during the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly, they did something positive in the purchase of the assets of NTCL. It was a good decision. MTS has provided continued employment in Hay River while providing a very essential service to the communities in the Northwest Territories. With the future development of resources along the Mackenzie Valley corridor, we could see a spike in employment and revenue with MTS.

This government, however, must look at MTS's position within the Department of Infrastructure and consider the option of making it a Crown corporation in order to properly track revenue and expenses and streamline its operations.

To address issues of employment, contracting, and procurement in Hay River, we need to focus on infrastructure projects in the South Slave. One such project I would like to see happen, starting at least within the next four years, is the reconstruction of Highway No. 1 from the border to Enterprise. This highway has had minimal work over the past several years and is in fairly poor condition. It is the highway that, I guess, welcomes tourists to the Northwest Territories. This work could be accomplished over several years, thus allowing opportunities for local and northern contractors, employment for local and northern residents, and supply of goods and services by local and northern retailers and contractors.

Tying into the fishing and marine industries is a matter of dredging. Dredging has been discussed numerous times over the last few Assemblies; however, there has been no action. It is time to sit down with the federal government, the First Nations, the fishers, and MTS to discuss how we will start this important project. This matter has to be addressed and completed at the earliest as possible.

Further to this, the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, in cooperation with the federal government, must take action with respect to the building and completion of an all-weather highway along the Mackenzie Corridor. This would help to alleviate the current economic situation by way of business, employment, and training opportunities for Northerners. It has a potential for lowering the cost of goods, as well.

The GNWT itself is a consumer of goods and services. We must ensure that the BIP program remains in place and that it is monitored and applied fairly across the North. It needs to be

reviewed to ensure that larger projects capture the benefits of the BIP incentives, as well.

Another issue in Hay River, a very important one, is housing. Hay River is experiencing a shortage of market and subsidized rental units. Fire damage to the high-rise building in Hay River resulted in a loss of 122 rental apartments. Due to this loss, people have been forced to relocate to outside of the NWT or find accommodation with friends and/or relatives. This is not an acceptable situation. To compound this problem, there is limited land available on which to construct buildings to offset the loss of rental units. We are looking at one to two years before land would be ready for said development. I will be requesting that this government work with these residents to find solutions to ensure they are looked after sooner than later, as winter is upon us.

Education. Education is close to everyone's heart. Residents in Hay River are concerned about access to education. They are concerned about class size. They are concerned about limited classroom assistants. They are concerned about recruitment of educators. They are concerned about budgets. Mostly, they are concerned about the students, the ones who are impacted by all of those issues.

The NWT has a relatively small population, which should work to our benefit when it comes to providing quality education. We talk about a university, yet our children are struggling with access and getting to school. We need to focus on the youth and ensure they have every opportunity to graduate from high school with an education that does not require further upgrading to get them into the trades, college, or university. We should be expanding and strengthening the programs at Aurora College in Fort Smith. If we can educate Northerners in the North, we will experience superior retention rates in the areas of education.

Land claims. If we want a strong economy, we need to promote the timely settlement of land claims and self-government in the NWT. This will provide the certainty needed for development to occur and bolster our economy. The GNWT has to re-evaluate its role with respect to negotiations. Do we actually need to be at the table? Should we only be in a supporting role with the Indigenous governments? These are questions we must ask, if we are to resolve land claims and self-government agreements in a timely manner.

Being on the south shore of the Great Slave there, the water has come up on numerous occasions. People are concerned that industries in southern Canada will continue to negatively impact our access to quality, quantity, and flow of water. This government has to ensure we have a solid working

relationship with Indigenous organizations if we are to protect our water and our lands.

These are some of the issues that arose there during my walk-around in Hay River. There are many other issues which I will be addressing in the near future. As we go along, this will probably increase. Again, I look forward to working with everybody here, and hopefully we will have a great four years. We probably only have three actual years to do the work in, so good luck. Thanks.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Mr. R. Simpson, the Member-elect for Hay River South.

Members, before we move on, I want to take this opportunity to recognize a number of visitors in the gallery. First of all, I would like to recognize Mr. Robert C. McLeod. Mr. McLeod is formerly the dean of the Legislative Assembly, having served in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> legislatures, and he continues to be the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, and the Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation. Welcome, Mr. McLeod.

I also want to recognize and welcome Mr. Alfred Moses, a former Member of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and still the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, the Minister of MACA, and the Minister responsible for the Worker and Safety Compensation Commission. Welcome to you both. I hope you are enjoying the view from that part of the building.

The attendance of our two former Members from Inuvik is a good segue to two Members from Inuvik, and I will turn the floor over to the Member-elect for Inuvik Boot Lake, Ms. Thom.

#### MS. DIANE THOM'S SPEECH

**MS. THOM:** Thank you. Good morning, colleagues. It is great to be here finally. A day late, but that is fine. I just want to start off by thanking my constituents of Inuvik Boot Lake for having me here. I am very honoured to be sitting here.

I am going to start off by talking about the Indigenous relations. I recognize the need for improved relations between the GNWT and Indigenous people. I am a witness to this. To address this issue in the short term, educational sessions should be mandatory for GNWT employees who are dealing with Indigenous people. The goal of these sessions should be to provide some knowledge on the history and culture of Indigenous people. This will provide an understanding which will foster respect and appreciation towards Indigenous people and allow for improved working relationships.

The other topic is land claims, and we are kind of talking about common themes here and self-determination. These agreements allow for the federal government to provide communities and Indigenous groups with core funding, tax sharing agreements, tax revenue agreements, and also direct and multi-year funding.

Upon ratification of these, either the constitutions or the agreement, there is no pressure for these Indigenous groups to draw down law-making authority except bill capacity. I think that is important. Most of these Indigenous groups have been ready for years. I know many groups have been negotiating for over 20 years, and I think that the GNWT needs to work closely with the Indigenous groups to get some of these agreements finalized.

Healthcare. The healthcare system is important to every family in the NWT. Therefore, as leaders, our goal should be to advocate for our constituents to receive a high quality of medical care and services. To achieve this, we need to keep up with the medical advancements and best practises by providing support and investment in our healthcare professionals, the equipment and infrastructure, and also to reduce the waiting lists for residents to see health specialists. You look at my community now in Inuvik, and the wait list is over a year for someone to come in ear, nose, and throat, so there is that pressure to get things moving a lot quicker.

Also, social support. I don't believe the problem is just about alcohol and drugs. It is about some of the root problems and the inability to address trauma from residential schools. A poor economy, lack of jobs, and not enough social housing is a system cycle that needs to be addressed.

The other thing I heard in doing my door-to-door, which, yes, your knuckles get sore from knocking at all of those doors, but the other thing is elder abuse. That is a big thing, and a lot of people are concerned that there is not enough support for them and it's just becoming so common that people allow it to happen.

The recruitment and retaining of nurses in the North is also essential. Currently, there is no incentive for nurses to come work in the North, where you look at some of them would rather fly in and fly out. That was a big concern that I was hearing from a lot of my constituents in the Boot Lake riding.

Also, heating source. We are all aware that Inuvik residents mostly rely on natural gas as their main heating source. The constituents are concerned with the lifespan of the natural gas, and it's quite worrisome because they are wondering if they are able to get through the winter, and I think that is very important for my constituents.

Climate change. Our elders have told us for years that something is not right in our seasonal patterns, which in my view is climate change. You look at it now, it's October, and we had snow on the ground; it went away. It's not normal. The 2030 Climate Change Strategic Framework was developed, and I think some of the feedback as part of that was categorized into nine themes, and I would like to ensure that the capacity and support is available to continue moving forward in this area, using the work contingent as a starting point.

Education is critical in improving our education system, which will have a positive impact in other areas like the spin-offs in employment, income support, housing, health, and crime rates. Some issues to address within our educational system include the ratio of students per teacher as well as improving the success rate of our high school graduates to get them directly into college and universities rather than using up their prep program. Another thing, it's great that residents are utilizing the Jordan's Principle funding, as it is a help to the schools, the parents, and the students, but they are afraid, as a result of this announcement, when will it end and will it continue, because this just cannot continue to be a Band-Aid solution.

Recreation priorities. The one thing I heard from my constituents in Boot Lake was the commitment that the GNWT made to the Town of Inuvik 15 years ago for the swap of the school land and replacing the ball and soccer field. My constituents want to have this deal done and completed.

What would I like to see in four or 10 years? We need economic stability, rather than a boom and bust. We have seen this in the Beaufort Delta oil and gas days. We have also seen it along with some of the mines that are happening in the Northwest Territories. I have heard and agreed that let's finally connect the Mackenzie Valley Highway. There are so many spin-offs as a result of making this happen. To ensure that our communities prosper, it is crucial to lay the foundation for a stable economic future. We need to invest in the well-being and set the stage for success for our next generation.

We, as elected officials, have to start thinking outside the box in order to make these happen. It's difficult, recognizing the different needs of each of the regions. I think that is what we will hear today as we start to talk about what we have heard. We have all heard different things. We need to ensure continued investment in building capacity, tourism, developing a new industry with a focus on economic development.

We also should be making a concerted effort to encourage resource development. The Prime Minister established a freeze on oil and gas

exploration and development without proper consultation. We should also lobby for further investments from the Arctic and northern framework that was recently announced by the federal government. Yes, I am looking forward to the next four years working with all of you, and I am sure that, by the time we get around today, we will hear a lot of common themes, so thank you. Quyanainni.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Ms. Thom, and certainly common themes are one of the things that we are keeping our ears open for when we start progressing towards setting priorities. Next, I will turn to the newly elected Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Ms. Semmler.

#### MS. LESA SEMMLER'S SPEECH

**MS. SEMMLER:** Good morning, everyone. Uvlaami. First, I would like to say it is a great honour to be standing here as MLA-elect representing the riding of Inuvik Twin Lakes. I am truly grateful to the residents for selecting me to be their voice in this 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly, and I would also like to thank Minister Robert C. McLeod for his numerous years representing the Inuvik Twin Lakes riding. To my colleagues here today, congratulations to you, as well. I look forward to working with you over the next four years, as we strive to work better for the lives of all of our residents.

Today, I want to share with you some of the important and repeated concerns in my riding that I heard about along the campaign period. As we go through our priority-setting process, these are important issues to the residents of the Inuvik Twin Lakes, and they are also serious concerns to me as an Inuvik Twin Lakes resident. I would like to start with the health of our residents.

Mental health and addictions. We have an increasing homeless population in our community that needs to be addressed. We need to support these residents in their healing, and sending residents who are mainly Indigenous out of the territory is not the answer. We need to have local, community, regional, and territorial programs where we involve our Indigenous partners to aid in this creation. Our residents want to be able to attend alone or as a family. Sending our family members away has not proven in past history to do any good, but to cause more harm and trauma. Let's not continue to repeat this history. We need to support these residents with basic needs when they are completing any type of treatment, as well as providing places to live and programs to continue to support them. Without these, they fall back into the cycle where they were before.

I heard a lot about medical travel on my door-to-door visits. Inuvik is a regional hub, but a lot of our

residents get sent to Yellowknife and Edmonton. For many of those residents in Inuvik, a lot of them have never left Inuvik, and so, when we have residents who have to be sent to Yellowknife or Edmonton, it's very scary. They are already under stress from the illness or whatever they are being sent for, and then to have to do it alone is, in my opinion, inhumane to these residents because it causes a lot of stress on them. I have heard that because some elders can walk and can speak English that they do not qualify just because they are an elder. Well, what about fear and what about anxiety and all of those other things that this causes?

There is a lack of trust in our health system. With high turnover in staff, this lack of trust is continuing to build where residents do not want to access health services, as they are finding it difficult to trust the system and they feel like they are not being treated with respect. I feel that stabilizing the workforce will aid in building trust and connections with the residents and communities. It will also increase the cultural awareness and safety amongst the staff, instead of trying to teach them a four-hour course for a two-week period that they are going to spend in our community, and again and again and again. This type of training is not worth the manager's time, and it negatively impacts our community members.

Elders. We continue to hear that we have an aging population, and we know this to be true. We need to ensure that our elders can remain in their homes as long as they can. We need to support them by increasing after-hours and weekend home support for them so this can be a reality in all of our communities. Without this, families get burnt out, elders get neglected and eventually end up in our long-term cares before they need to.

Youth. We have heard a lot of things about mental health in our youth. We need to be working with our youth in our communities, especially in our small communities where they do not have a lot of services, they do not have a lot of recreational services, they lack a lot of support. With the recent suicides in our region, we have seen it; I have personally seen that our students, our teenagers, are suffering, and we need to work with them to find ways to make them feel like they are part of the community and achieve wellness.

Housing. Inuvik has a lack of affordable housing. Long wait lists; some have been waiting years. They are couch surfing on families' and wherever they can. Some live under buildings. Some live in tents. Some are staying in our shelters for years; permanently, it feels like.

I have heard that some of the policies are hindering or negatively impacting people who are in housing;

for example, basing the rent on last year's income tax. This causes problems for some, as a lot of work is seasonal and there is no guarantee for income in the next year. An example, in our region, in our community is the Tuktoyaktuk Highway. We had a lot of people working on that project, but now it's done and people are expected to pay that higher rent this year based on their income last year, even though they may be unemployed.

Power bills are also an issue that I heard when I went door-to-door. In the past years, they have gone from having subsidized power in the housing units to having to pay full power. These buildings are the oldest buildings in our community, and are probably the least energy efficient, and these are our most vulnerable families who are living in these units and having to pay these high power bills. It is unacceptable. It takes away from their bottom dollar to feed their family. We need to find creative ways to deal with our housing issues right across the North.

Cost of living. The economy in Inuvik is down, and people are struggling to survive and pay their bills. At the same time that the economy is suffering, the cost of living in Inuvik continues to increase. Residents are concerned that they will no longer be able to live in Inuvik as a result of the high cost of living. In fact, I am aware of people who sell their homes altogether and leave the community. I am aware of people who are selling their homes to move into rentals or to go into low-cost housing because they just can't afford it. I heard from elders who took on programs in the previous governments who live in elder homes who no longer can afford to live in those homes and don't know how to manage their bills.

I have also heard that people are struggling with the price of natural gas. While a lot of our homes were converted to natural gas some time ago, the drastic increase to heat our homes is very concerning to the people of Inuvik. Our residents don't understand how we can have the infrastructure be surrounded by natural gas, yet still pay these high prices. We as a government need to find ways to make it affordable to live in all our communities.

Education. One of the terms that we hear over and over and over again, and I know the education system does not like to hear it, is social passing. It is a term that is used when our students move along through the system, but it is negatively impacting their ability to successfully move through the system. We have students who are very keen to know that they don't have to do the work to move along, and by the time they get to grade 10 we are seeing what we call, as my previous work in education as a board member, the "grade 10 bottleneck" where, by the time they move along to

grade 9 and they move into grade 10, they are having difficulties advancing past this stage.

We need to look at how we are using that program in our system and ensuring that students who have the capability are not being social-passed. We need an education system that is equal to or better than the rest of Canada. This includes barrier-free childhood education, because if we have more of our early childhood kids from zero to five in programs that will enhance them, then by the time they get to kindergarten they will be ready. This is something that is near and dear to my heart, and I feel that this will help with all children having access to childcare and families that don't have to worry about how they're going to come up with paying that.

Attendance continues to be an issue that we face in the communities. We need to build bridges between families and the education system that will allow for better attendance. We still face an intergenerational trauma as a result of the residential school system and its effects, and we see this in all our outlying communities, and I'm sure we see it in Yellowknife, as well, that, once we have a family, and this is what I heard, is, "They are treating my child the way they treated me in school, and I'm not going to force them to be there." These are things that I have heard along the way.

We also need a strong regional college campus. We need to bring back programming that has been lost in our community. The Natural Resource Technology Program in our community provided jobs into our region. We know that there is a program in Fort Smith, but the people who took the program in our region got jobs in our region, trained in our region, and it was very successful.

We also lost the trades program in our region, and a lot of the members of our community need to have options in the region, because they do not want to pack up their families and go, and it's unrealistic for us to think that they should.

We know that we have an aging population, and yet we have sporadic health programs in our college. We had the home support worker. That is sporadic. We need to plan for future development that is going to be into our community. We need to provide those courses in our region so that people from our region are training and getting certified so that they can take care of our elders. We need to take care of our own elders in our long-term care facilities.

I'll move on to jobs. As mentioned, in Inuvik, like all other communities, we all need jobs. We cannot lose any more jobs in our community due to centralization. We have lost some high-paying jobs in the justice and health field and our past leaders worked hard for decentralization. We need to

review the BIP policy and create ways to ensure local contractors have a better chance of securing contracts, as opposed to outside contractors. An example might be including more points for a contractor who is local and even more points for hiring local, because that money stays in our community and it feeds our families and our communities. We need strong communities for a stronger NWT.

Working with our Indigenous people. We need to be working together with our Indigenous governments to achieve more for our residents. We need to remove unnecessary barriers that hinder this progress. We need to finalize land claims and self-government agreements, which will bring certainty to the NWT in terms of investments and creating true partnerships with our Indigenous governments.

Working with Canada. We also need Canada to play a bigger role in helping us achieve our goals. Canada can help us immensely to meet our objectives, to truly be the true North strong and free.

If we as the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly can make progress on these issues over the next four years, they will have positive impacts on the NWT and our residents for years to come. Thank you. Quyanainni.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Ms. Semmler. Next, we have the Member-elect for Kam Lake, Ms. Cleveland.

#### MS. CAITLIN CLEVELAND'S SPEECH

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Bonjour. [English translation not provided.] Hello, and good morning. My name is Caitlin Cleveland, and I am here proudly as MLA-elect for Kam Lake. I am honoured and thankful to have been entrusted this role by my family, friends, and neighbours.

I start today by congratulating every single one of you because, man or woman, as we sit here today, together we have made history. In one election, we have gone from the lowest gender-balanced House in Canada to the highest. Together, we have an opportunity to do things differently. This is not only a turning point for the history of the NWT, but also the world. People are moving beyond borders. The climate is changing. Our expectations are evolving, and the world is watching.

What does it look like, when we work together? How can we shape the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly to reflect the values and strengths of every single one of us, and how can we do things differently?

Throughout my campaign, I used the tagline "I believe in our North," and it resonated with many of the people of Kam Lake. I truly believe that the only

way forward is together, and that, to truly succeed, we must work collaboratively with the success of the entire NWT at heart.

We need to be able to trust not only in our own resolve to do good work for our constituents, but also trust that our colleagues recognize the importance of supporting the success of every Northerner, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, race, culture, religion, place of birth, or home community. We need to move forward together by empowering our North to overcome challenges that are pushing at us from our past and see the opportunities pulling us into our future.

My platform was divided into three key areas; people, land, and prosperity. It was important to me to identify what links each of these three elements and how I saw them working together. I reflected on how our territory operates, our strengths, and what I want to see evolve. For me, it all came back to connection.

People are truly our greatest resource in the Northwest Territories. People make our houses into homes and our lands into communities. People also make up 75 percent of our territorial income through federal transfer payments. We need people. We need to support and grow the people who do live here. We need to work with our public servants to promote and market the NWT as a great place to live and work, and we need to ensure that we have the appropriate supports for people who choose to make the North home. We need to connect people to the North and then connect them to the right supports when they arrive.

As much as we prefer people to come and stay, sometimes they came for a short visit to see the aurora, catch some fish, visit some friends and family. Last year, British Columbia welcomed over \$700 million in cultural-experience tourism. This is a great opportunity for our North, and we need to capture it. However, for our people who already live here and for people who choose to make the North home, we need to focus on growing our infrastructure to better support the ability of Northerners to thrive. I want to take you through the top concerns I heard at the doors of Kam Lake constituents.

Affordable, healthy housing was the number one discussion at doors in Kam Lake. Our housing infrastructure, not only in Kam Lake but across the North, needs to be assessed. Housing has an incredible ability to build communities, and we need to keep this in mind, along with affordability, multi-generational, and accessible housing. Housing should connect and build people, not isolate them.

The second-most discussed topic at doors was our energy infrastructure and the fact that not one solution will work for every single community. We need to expand our energy infrastructure to smaller-scale mixed-energy systems to reduce our dependency on imported fuels across the Northwest Territories. These smaller systems pay back faster, are more resilient, and therefore reduce the cost of living for all Northerners.

Both the first and second primary concerns of residents can be linked to the cost of living. People are finding it harder to thrive in the North, but I was inspired by how many people discussed solutions by focusing on increasing the resiliency of our northern communities. In addition to housing and energy infrastructure, we discussed food infrastructure and the need to focus on locally grown and locally harvested food sources. The success of the Inuvik community greenhouse was celebrated more than once, along with our ability going forward to socially and environmentally sustainably harvest from our lands and waters.

Our communications infrastructure was highlighted. Many residents questioned the cost of creating broadband redundancy versus the lost revenue for the NWT when our communication systems are compromised. Transportation infrastructure and, more specifically, the road to resource was a polarizing topic with my constituents, who questioned the value of mining royalties, lost labour dollars through non-northern workers, and the environmental impacts of development versus the cost of the road.

Finally, education infrastructure. Environmental capital is where, the more you use, the less you have. With social and intellectual capital, the more you use, the more you have. It multiplies into beautiful communities. This means that social and intellectual capital is most sustainable for us.

The polytechnic was of huge interest, not just to the people within the area of Kam Lake, but throughout Yellowknife. The polytechnic and the innovation it brings increases our resilience to change by creating a research and training base for our future. In addition to the polytechnic, we know that job projections show trades as an area of opportunity for graduates. We need to align industry leaders for direction, skilled tradespeople for mentorship, foster partnership between Skills Canada and local businesses, and support schools and apprenticeships to expand trades opportunities.

Schools need our support, but not only to grow these tradespeople or graduates ready for a polytechnic. They need our support to grow children and keep families connected. I believe we need to change the protocols within our government and address how we are allowed to work within schools,

with the whole well-being of the child in mind. In addition to the new child and youth care coordinator positions, we need a program navigator who works with families in connection with this position to connect families to government programs with the purpose of keeping families connected, and parents need to be involved in and empowered through this process.

We need to be able to work together to lift families up, building resiliency in our communities rather than continuing to work in inefficient silos. We cannot expect teachers to address the educational needs of students when the fundamental survival needs of our children are not being met. We need to cut away the red tape that prevents us from having meaningful conversations that bring about meaningful change. The success of our children depends on our ability to come together with respect and integrity. The program Building Stronger Families is starting work similar to this, but we need to keep the momentum going.

Connected to education at both ends is affordable childcare and after-school care. Safe, affordable childcare supports a parent's ability to pursue further education and meaningful employment, as well as a child's ability to thrive within the school system. However, not every community will have the same exact childcare and after-school care needs, and this is fluid with all of our programs and supports. Every single one of our communities is unique, and what success looks like to each community may differ.

We need to work with each of our communities to establish unique wellness indicators and empower local governments to administer and choose programs that work for them. Empowered communities show increased participation in evidence-based, informed decision making, where communities can decide their future with the support of the GNWT. Maybe that future is improved graduation and employment rates, increased use of Indigenous languages, increased agriculture and local harvesting, or more on-the-land-based schooling.

Throughout the election month, many of us shared a vision of a government led by stronger meaningful relationships both in the walls of this House, with the community and Indigenous governments, the Government of Canada, and throughout our communities and territory.

We started our day yesterday eating and sharing with Dene Nation, our first meeting as MLAs-elect. There, we discussed the need to come to the table, to be present, to listen, and to understand. "Reconciliation" as a word means "to come together." Reconciliation is key to both people and land, and with land comes land claims. We need to



prioritize finalizing land claims and fostering nation-to-nation relationships.

Reconciliation is also language. We are unique in the NWT, with 11 official languages. Language is a tool that helps us decide what to see and how to see it. It is a cultural memory as a way to see the world in a new light at a time when the status quo approach digs us deeper holes.

Reconciliation is also about healing. Our people are hurting, and we need to heal together. Healing does not only need to happen in cases where our people are at their lowest, but at every opportunity. We need to collectively understand the root cause of addictions and to develop a suite of solutions. School-based resiliency programs and services for children, listening opportunities for people to share and others to hear, medical detox opportunities here in the North, well-sourced and supported on-the-land treatment, and community-based transitional programming to help people recover are all elements of healing solutions that need to happen within our territory.

Prosperity is something that happens over time. It is not a lottery. As we enter into a government that everyone has said will be fiscally tight, we need to think beyond our four years and put a plan in motion for the fiscal success of future governments.

Throughout our campaigns, we were asked again and again what we would do to support economic diversification to build our economy. While there are many opportunities within the North, a lot of the tools to encourage development are similar and consistent: making strategic infrastructure investments that reduce the cost of energy; ensuring the GNWT policies and processes are modern, fair, transparent and accessible; settling land claims with respect and integrity; streamlining regulatory processes and clarifying measurable objectives to provide certainty for business and the environment; by supporting local and Indigenous business development that align with our vision of a healthy sustainable north; and by strengthening the NWT skilled labour pool, where the conversation shifts from not "if" but "how."

Great leaders inspire action by defining their "why." During my door-to-door visit in the Kam Lake riding, I visited an elder, or knowledge-keeper, and his granddaughter. My father-in-law and I tossed a ball back and forth with them while we spoke, and the knowledge-keeper asked me what an MLA was, where they worked, and what their role in the community was. As I explained, the knowledge-keeper shied away and replied, "I am just a nobody, and I don't vote." At this moment, I had a tag line and had discovered how my platform connected together, but I did not yet have my "why." This man in this moment became my "why."

Today, we share our "what," what we want to accomplish. Over the coming years, we will work collaboratively with northern public servants to determine our "how," but, to truly be effective leaders who inspire change, we need to work together to establish our collective "why." Thank you.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Member-elect for Kam Lake, Ms. Cleveland. Members-elect, I have just received a note from the interpreters asking me to slow down when I speak. I have a bad tendency to speak a little bit too fast, so it's also a good reminder to all of us to slow down your speech so that the interpreters can keep up, and to almost make an effort to speak ridiculously slowly so that they can keep up with the translation. Now, we are going to turn to our first returning Member, who I know has no difficulty speaking slowly; and keep in mind that there is nothing going to happen when the clock runs out after 15 minutes. No one is going to cut you off. So, Mr. Blake, the returning Member for Mackenzie Delta, the floor is yours.

#### MR. FREDERICK BLAKE'S SPEECH

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Good morning, colleagues. It is with great honour that I congratulate everyone in the Chamber today. Over the next four years, we have a lot of work ahead of us. This election has made history with the amount of women being voted in. Let's make this 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly one to remember by making our mandates a reality. We have the power to help our ridings with our voices, but mostly we as Members of this Assembly have the power to make changes to the NWT by working together.

Today, I want to touch on my riding. We have many challenges in the Mackenzie Delta, as we do in all our ridings, especially ridings with small communities. Today, as I set my priorities for the Mackenzie Delta, I do so with so much determination and the will to make the Mackenzie Delta succeed in all aspects of our day-to-day living.

Our services need a lot of attention, starting with, and in no particular order; I say "no particular order" because to me they are all important. I stand here representing the Mackenzie Delta and the whole Northwest Territories.

I'd like to begin with Aklavik and the need for a new school. Not renovations to what is already existing to the oldest school in the Northwest Territories; my main goal is to get a new building, with all the necessary space for the best quality of education for my constituents. We've been to Aklavik many times and the concerns are echoed, that we need a new school.

Talking about education, in all three communities in my riding, we want the same level of education as in the regional centres. Our students deserve the best quality and highest level of education they can get. As it is right now, we have the best teachers, dedicated to our students and willing to stay long-term, which is beneficial to our students and our communities. However, I still get feedback that we could improve in our system. I will be talking to the DEAs and BDEC, hoping to help them decide priorities so that I can advocate on their behalf.

Health concerns are always brought up from time to time, from the lack of medical escorts for our elders, medical escorts for our cancer patients, and for our sick patients who go for surgery. Quality healthcare is a concern right across the NWT. My constituents want to see more dentists' visits, more doctors' visits, and the same regular visits in all three of my communities, as well as physio, counselling, the list goes on. Colleagues, we want more healthcare and we need relief for our health and social services workers. We need them to be healthy in order to look after our families and our children. Also, my constituents would like to see long-term care in our communities, in order to keep our elders in the communities and with their families.

Policing in Tsiigehtchic. We appreciate the extra hands that we do receive from Fort McPherson, but we know hands down that we need full-time RCMP in Tsiigehtchic. I will advocate on this and will make sure that we have something full-time sooner than later.

Our economy is at a stand-still. Let's get some money in the Mackenzie Delta to create some jobs. Also for the Beaufort Delta, we need the Mackenzie Valley Highway extended from Wrigley to Inuvik. Also, increase our funding for our community governments so that they can focus on infrastructure such as swimming pools, upgrading our arenas, baseball diamonds, and community roads, just to name a few, because, in order to keep any of our professionals in our communities, whether it's doctors, teachers, social workers, we need these sorts of facilities. Also for our youth; you know, our future.

The Dempster Highway and our winter ice roads are always in need of building, operation, and maintenance. I want to secure funding so that we always have work for our local contractors. Not only that, the upkeep of our highways and ice roads only ensure the safety for people travelling to and from.

For Aklavik, an all-season road from Aklavik to Fort MacPherson has been talked about for years; I know, because I've mentioned it more than you can imagine. This is what we want, and it's a reality. We have the power to make this happen. Imagine the high cost of living right now, especially with the

rivers ready to freeze over, making Aklavik an isolated community. Being isolated only means food and fuel cost increases. This has to change.

Daycare for our communities is also another priority. I've heard from many constituents that, in order for them to hold a stable job, if they want to attend school and if they want to take advantage of training opportunities, they need daycare. Daycare is one of our highest priorities.

Housing will always be way up there for concerns for the Mackenzie Delta. In fact, it is a concern for every riding. Our communities are growing. We have less and less housing for young families wanting to start out on their own. We have homeless people in our communities, whether we want to admit it or not. All our communities have individuals couch surfing, nowhere to go, and I want to focus on housing, more housing units for singles, for families, and for our elders.

Also, working together with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Inuvialuit Regional Council, our bands, designated Gwich'in organizations, and community corporations.

I have so much more to add. I want the best for the NWT, but right now the Mackenzie Delta is my riding so I will speak on their behalf and fight for the next four years for the best I can get for my constituents.

I want to close by thanking my supporters, the individuals who came forward to give me advice, and for everyone just having faith in me to lead them in this 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly. My biggest supporter, Jaimie, my children, my parents, and everyone, I just want to say thank you, and I look forward to working with you all. Mahsi.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Mr. Blake, the Member-elect for Mackenzie Delta. Next, we have the Member-elect for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty. I wish to remind all Members-elect that setting your language dials to 1 will allow you to hear the interpretation in English. Mr. Lafferty, the floor is yours.

#### MR. JACKSON LAFFERTY'S SPEECH

**MR. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Clerk. [Translation] Mr. Clerk, before we start, I'd like to mention the four missing on Great Slave Lake, and I think we should give them one minute of silence and do a prayer for them. [End of translation] Colleagues, I'd just like for us to take a moment of silence for the missing four fishermen and their families on the Great Slave Lake. Masi, Mr. Clerk. Our thoughts and prayers to the families in Hay River.

Mr. Clerk, [Translation] first of all, I'd like to congratulate all the elected MLAs for the region. We have a big job ahead of us. Today, when we look at the situation, everything is okay. Not only that, but when we look and reflect on our community, we have to represent our people. For myself, I represent the Monfwi region. They have given me a job for another four years. I am really thankful to my region. I think they have faith in me to continue, so I'm here again.

When we represent our people, we have to do our best. We have to always take advice from our people and put forward their concerns. That is the reason why we are here. We have to always remember who we represent. Also, we are here for the next four years. We are here on the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly, and we have a lot of issues ahead of us. Let's all work well together and support each other. We said that yesterday, and today we will be like a rock to push our issues forward.

When we look at the government, we are looking at three things. We always want to do the best for them. That is the reason why we are here. When we look at the government and MLAs, I want those two to work well together. We need to be cautious about issues and make sure that nothing goes wrong with our discussions. We also have to consider working with other organizations. We represent the Northwest Territories, 33 communities. We will have a lot of issues to discuss.

Yesterday, we had a meeting. We will also have another meeting next week with the Dene leaders. They will also give us advice on the issues that they want us to consider. Let's all work together on those issues, as well. The 19 MLAs who are here, let's put our packsack in front with all the issues on the table. They are our people's issues, and we need to try to help them with those.

I would also like to congratulate every one of you again. There are a few things I would like to talk about regarding housing, education, and also early childhood issues, our languages, our culture. I will also comment on that. Also, in the smaller, isolated communities, everything is so expensive. I want to talk about that and also talk about how we can improve our economy in the Northwest Territories. I will comment on that. I have said this much in my language, and now I will switch to English. I would like to thank you. Masi. [Translation ends]

Colleagues, I would just like to begin by congratulating all of you here today in our Chamber. I would just like to say masi to my Monfwi constituents, as well, the Monfwi constituents who have allowed me for another four years to serve them in this House as their representative. I also want to thank Mr. R.C. McLeod, who was here

earlier, on passing on the torch of being the Dean of this House to me, and I just want to say masi for all the services over the years.

Colleagues, it is my goal for the next four years that we need to look at the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly as a government that takes pride in itself in collaboration and also cooperation, a government that works together for the good of all of the people of the Northwest Territories. This government will be a government in which Cabinet and Regular Members have found a way to work closely together and effectively in a manner that satisfies both groups, both parties, and produces programs and services that truly help improve the quality of life for all Northerners.

The next four years present an opportunity to build on good work done by many people before us here today. We will work together to tackle issues that we know our residents face, such as high cost of living, health and wellness issues, education, employment challenges in small communities, homelessness, food security, and continuing efforts needed to support many, many northern families living with the effects of the history and legacy of the residential schools and the result of Indigenous language lost, and cultural practices and ceremonies.

Goal number one: in four years, the NWT Housing Corporation policy is amended to provide viable solutions to homelessness issues throughout the Northwest Territories. How are we going to do that? Continue to increase available, safe, affordable housing. To do this, we will have to re-evaluate our current policy and system so that it aligns with our community needs and meets our people's, as well; a made-in-the-North solution; innovation and also technology; and creating partnerships with local governments to empower them to build units for their communities and to further explore tiny homes initiatives and building capacity in communities to build them on their own.

Another goal that I would like to focus on is on the NWT polytechnic university or, as we call it, University of the North. My view is that it's been established it will provide Northerners as well as Canadians and international students a means to study diploma degrees and masters programs in a wide variety of trades; develop a post-secondary education act; establish increased post-secondary programming; encourage collaboration between the three NWT campuses to offer the best possible programs that meet the needs of our students; provide research opportunities for Canadians and international academics looking to climate change research and other Arctic-specific issues and challenges that impact studies in the Northwest Territories' climate change.

My vision is that, in 10 years, the majority of NWT students are choosing to attend our University of the North, rather than to go south, because the programs are the highest quality and provide students with the skills and knowledge and the certification required to be ready for a work force.

Another area is to improve JK through grade 12 education in the Northwest Territories; infrastructure for community schools; continued accountability for all schools; continuing to strengthen high-quality early education and JK through 12 education; continue to expand e-learning opportunities for small communities so that all high school students have some opportunity to take advantage of the advanced academic courses, regardless of their location; evaluate the Early Childhood Development Action Plan; a junior kindergarten instruction hours review; improve school formula funding; re-evaluate the NWT Education Act to reflect on the current educational needs and our priorities; programs and services in all NWT communities; quality and affordability of early childhood programs in all communities, including the 10 smallest communities that are currently unable to offer programming to children zero to three years of age.

Another goal to focus on is to increase efforts and the areas of language and culture preservation, advocate for and support language revitalization efforts, build capacity in communities to develop a pool of language teachers and knowledge-keepers, encourage Indigenous language immersion programs in the K to 12 education system so that 10 years from now we have students who are fluent in their language and are proud to use it; continue to support innovative initiatives honouring the Indigenous culture and ways of doing things, both within the government and at the grass-roots level.

I will just give you some examples: initiatives undertaken by the Department of Health and Social Services Indigenous health and community wellness division; Dene Nahjo's on-the-land and leadership initiatives; support on-the-land treatment program and justice program, including urban on-the-land wellness camp; programs that encourage traditional skills such as harvesting and trapping and encourage stewardship of the land and animals. These initiatives not only honour Indigenous languages, traditions, and beliefs but also work to preserve them.

Another goal is to develop a plan to deal with the high cost of living here in the Northwest Territories: food security by means of providing new incentives and supports to get more people back on the land, harvesting wildlife such as caribou, moose, musk ox, bison, et cetera. We need to put more emphasis on agriculture and helping Northerners get the training and skills and equipment to start growing

their own food in their community greenhouses and within the schools so that students learn from a young age about agriculture; invest additional funding in expanding the community harvesting funding focused on communities hiring a group of talented and trusted harvesters to go hunting for the community, in particular to go harvest wild meat and fish for the elderly and for the single mothers and for those who are sick and also disabled.

Another goal is to develop an energy plan: establish a plan to reduce the use of diesel generators in communities to cut the cost of living and look at more viable and green solutions such as hydro, solar, and wind power; commit to converting up to 50 percent of the GNWT infrastructures, buildings, schools, health centres, and warehouses, et cetera, to be more energy efficient, using wood pellets rather than using diesel to heat within the next 10 years.

Another goal that we need to seriously look at will be to improve economic viability of the Northwest Territories: settle all outstanding land claims and self-governments as it is in the best interest of the people of the NWT that we support our Indigenous governments in their right to self-governance and autonomy; work with Indigenous governments and the federal government to find a mutually agreeable solution to finalize.

Elected officials need to meet with the Indigenous leadership to identify what are the real challenges and to come up with solutions to support them, as this is the key to economic diversity and growth; investigate opportunities to increase tourism across the NWT with a focus on ecotourism so that all communities can benefit from the economic opportunities that tourism brings; continue supporting up-and-coming mining opportunities by reducing bureaucratic red tape and barriers to mining development opportunities. We need to be open for business for any business, for exploration and also future mining opportunities, but this has to be on our terms, northern terms, and we have a say; develop a plan to encourage mining and exploration in the Northwest Territories that satisfies both our need for economic development and environmental stewardship.

What steps should the GNWT take to achieve this vision? We need to be practical in our vision and not to create a priority plan that is overambitious. Our plan needs to be achievable. The 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly was overambitious. In the end, too many items were not achieved and are still in transition. Most small jurisdictions, provincial or territorial governments, set only 10 to 15 priorities. Our goal is to meet the needs of our people of the Northwest Territories. We cannot meet these needs if we overstretch ourselves. I am looking forward to

working with all of my colleagues in this House. Masi.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Member-elect for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty. Members-elect, it is 10:39 a.m. We will now take a break. There is coffee in the Members' lounge, and we will reconvene at 11:00 a.m. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Welcome back, Members-elect. Next [English translation not provided].

#### MR. RYLUND JOHNSON'S SPEECH

**MR. JOHNSON:**... I have faith in the process, and hopefully I will be returning here.

Colleagues, people of the Northwest Territories, I am honoured by this opportunity to stand in this Legislature before all of you and share my priorities in the coming four years.

Firstly, I want to introduce myself for those of you who I did not meet yesterday and for the many residents of the Northwest Territories who may not know me. I am 29 years old, which makes me by far the youngest Member of this Legislature. I was also born and raised in Summerland, BC, and I know that there is sometimes uncertainty when a person is not born and raised in the North, but I assure you I earned the trust of the residents of Yellowknife North, and, in time, I hope to earn all of your trust. To those Members, I hope to earn the privilege to invite me to your communities so I can meet your families, so I can speak to your constituents. Over my four years, I hope to get to all of the communities of the Northwest Territories.

I am a lawyer by trade. I am deeply passionate about policy work and deeply passionate about the work we do here in this Legislature. Yellowknife is my home. It is where I have learned so much. It has given me so much opportunity. It's where I want to raise a family. I want to recognize that I come from a place of privilege. I came up here as a lawyer. I have never known what it's like to have the government take my children away. I have never known what it's like to live in a community where the jobs are few and far between, and that is why I intend to listen.

I intend to listen to all of you during this Assembly, and I want you to recognize that, when I speak, it is not just me speaking. I am speaking for the constituents of Yellowknife North. I have a very diverse riding. It is a riding full of permanent residents who could not vote, but they are still my constituents. It is a riding full of doctors and lawyers and senior bureaucrats and policy experts who have educated me on the various areas of law. It is

a riding with people struggling on income assistance. When I speak, I speak for my most vulnerable constituents, and I will give you that same service, that over the next four years, when you speak, I recognize you speak for the people who elected you and sent you here. That is what I think we all have to remember. We represent the people of the Northwest Territories.

I would like to thank each and every one of my constituents for taking the time to share their stories, concerns, and aspirations throughout this campaign. I am humbled by the chance to be their voice for the next four years. As a Caucus, we were handed an overwhelming mandate for change in this election: change the way we invest; change the way we address our most pressing issues; change the way we do business in this Legislature. We have a duty to our constituents to ensure that's reflected in our priorities. I will now talk about what I believe that change looks like.

Change to me is a government pushing for big strides to better our society. Our public service contains some of the foremost policy experts in the world. No one is better suited to enact policy than our bureaucrats who work and live in the North. Now, I recognize we are going to enter into this game of "survivor" to select our Cabinet and Premier over the next three weeks. I myself will not be seeking Cabinet. I intend to be a Regular Member who advocates for my constituents. Let us not let this process divide us. After that vote, let us meet in Caucus and come together. Over the next four years, we will make hard decisions. They will not always be unanimous, but let them not divide us. After those votes, we will come together in Caucus and we will be whole again.

In my platform, I advocated and I got elected on a platform of progressive social policies, one of which I would like to speak to is universal daycare, and why universal. The word "universal" does not discriminate. It does not matter if you are white or Indigenous. It does not matter if you are from a community or Yellowknife. It allows us to enact policy that applies to all of the people of the Northwest Territories. Let us think bigger, dare to lead, and be the change we wish to see.

We are all here because we won. We have earned this, and now we must be leaders. We all fight for our constituents. I recognize that, but reactionary is not the key. We must create a user-focused government. We do not want a faceless bureaucracy. We are small; we can be nimble. When someone comes to our government, especially in our communities, they know that person by name. We can hear our constituents, and we can get what they want. We must try to find solutions, not be the reason for inaction, not create red tape for our Northerners but listen. I emphasize

universal daycare because early childhood makes sure that every child ages zero to three has a safe, fun place to thrive. If we want to revive our Indigenous languages, we need to create language nests. Universal daycare is a place to create those language nests.

We were asked to see what our priorities look like over the next four years and what the NWT looks like in the next 10 years. I would also like to think about what the NWT looks like over the next 30 years. I believe one of the first things this Assembly should do is declare that we are in a climate emergency and recognize that all of our decision making going forward must always keep that fact in mind, for, as we advocate for social change, it means nothing if we do not take meaningful climate action.

I believe we have leaders we can send to the international stage. Just as we have seen in the pacific islands and the leaders in Greenland, we can probably do more by sending our leaders to speak on the international stage about the effects of climate change here in the North, we can do more to lower emissions by convincing others to do so probably than we can lower them here in the North.

Now, I think it is important to speak about mining at this time because often, as an environmentalist, my views on mining get mischaracterized. Mining and the environment do not have to be polarized. In fact, I would like to see the first carbon-neutral mine in the NWT. I would like to see us use green mining technology that we can export around the world. One of the best things I think we could do for the City of Yellowknife and for the Northwest Territories is to have a gold mine right outside our boundaries, and I recognize that is scary. I recognize that is scary as we stand on 237,000 tonnes of arsenic, but we must remember that we must have faith in our land and water boards and our regulatory processes; we must have faith that new mining technology will not allow another Giant Mine disaster to happen. As the world looks to rare earth metals, it's important to remember that solar panels are not made of wood and lithium batteries do not grow on trees. We have an opportunity here in the North to be leaders, and an international race to the bottom for commodity prices does not benefit us, does not benefit Canada.

I want to tell you that I believe this last government got it wrong when it came to mining. We sent our Cabinet to Vancouver to promote it, but we did not send our Indigenous governments with them and we did not send our land and water boards together. This conversation about exploration is meaningless without all parties at the table, without all parties buying in.

I believe change looks like a government that leads instead of follows. I heard throughout this campaign where my constituents want us to take the lead. One of those such proposals is a guaranteed liveable income, also known as a universal basic income. We have to recognize that we are not exempt from the processes of automation and the labour market changes that are happening around the world. When I look forward to the year 2050, I want to see a universal income in the North. I recognize that some priorities may not be accomplished in one election cycle, but we cannot lose sight of them. We cannot lose sight and hit "reset" every election cycle. I want to create priorities that plan for 10, 20, 30 years.

We have an opportunity to establish a hub of students for this kind of economy by building a northern university in our capital. However, I believe this issue has become unnecessarily divisive. I would like to see this Assembly commit to net-zero job loss at Fort Smith campus. I would like to see this Assembly do the same for the Inuvik campus. We are talking about expansion into a university. We are not talking about moving Aurora College to Yellowknife. We have to think bigger. We must recognize that it is our university and that it is a university that must serve the needs of our students first and foremost. That means training nurses, social workers, and teachers to respond to the unique cultural context in each of our communities.

We need programs focused on skills like geoscience, graphic design, environmental rehabilitation, which are desperately needed in our northern organizations and put our students to work. We need trade programs that focus on green construction and retrofit techniques that are designed specifically for our infrastructure and climate. If we achieve this vision, I am confident this institution can establish our territory as a home of research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in our Arctic, but we must act now if we are ever going to get there.

For our economy to grow, we need to attract and retain people. I believe we need to take a new approach this time around to finally achieve those aims. The world is full of workers who don't need to be in a traditional office nine to five, but it is also full of companies who can have satellite corporate offices virtually anywhere. We have a unique territorial financing formula and a lot of latitude to fund incentives to get people and retain people in the North, so let's take up the torch where our past government stalled. Let's get the incentives right and make a strong case for entrepreneurs and workers to join our vibrant northern economy.

I believe we need to prioritize a green economy. Reducing energy consumption and saving costs on energy and logistics are crucial to our future. A big

way we can affect that change as a government is putting serious focus into retrofit programs. It is a proven way to generate economic activity, save costs in the long run, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is a way we can create good-paying jobs for our people, bring down their utility bills, and improve their quality of life; and we can do this while increasing demand for products which can be produced locally.

I believe change looks like a government with harm reduction at its core. People across our territory are struggling with intergenerational trauma, addictions, and mental health. I believe this Assembly must take leadership in reforming our supports for the most vulnerable people, in their most vulnerable times.

Let's make real investments in Housing First to bring the stability folks need to address their challenges. It works, and we should put the money behind it so it can succeed.

Let's implement programs such as a managed consumption program for alcohol and establish a supervised consumption site for drugs in our capital. These models save lives, help break the cycle of addiction, and help save long-term care costs in the healthcare system. It's been proven in Canada and abroad, and it's time we acted on that evidence, not get caught up in old prohibition debates.

For these programs to work, we need to staff our services with wraparound support. We need to prioritize getting more addictions and mental health professionals in our communities.

I also believe change looks like a justice system that is more just and culturally relevant. There is a general agreement among my constituents that our justice system is not working. I believe the single biggest thing we can do to fix it is to bring our focus to restorative justice. In the coming weeks, I will be pushing several initiatives under that theme for inclusion in our mandate.

Change looks like a government pushing to realize the true vision and intent of devolution. That means recognizing that the next step is devolving more powers to Indigenous governments and communities. That starts with settling our land claims. I believe this is the single most powerful thing we can do to advance reconciliation and end the uncertainty in our economy.

The next step is handing over the reins to some of these services and getting Indigenous governments the resources they need to deliver them directly to their constituents. I will make our regions stronger and help our service delivery better reflect the reality of our clients.

Change looks like transparency in government. As other jurisdictions accelerate towards greater transparency, we continue to foster a cloak of opacity. We need to be advocates for a government that is transparent, effective, and responsive for the sake of our constituents. I heard no shortage of great ideas from within the public service when I was knocking doors. As elected officials, it is our job to bring those ideas to the top and make sure we can implement them.

Colleagues, we have a lot of work ahead of us to be the change our constituents asked us to be. In getting to know each of you, I know none of you takes this responsibility lightly. As we get down to the business of governing, I have full confidence that we can be the most progressive, productive Assembly this territory has seen in a long time. I look forward to working with each of you in the spirit of consensus and in the service of our constituents.

Lastly, I want you to know that I will always be upfront and honest with you, and I ask that you do the same. As we commence this game of survivor for our Cabinet, Speaker, and Premier, I can tell you that my vote is open for anyone. It is open for those whose priorities align with mine. I will listen to you, and I ask that you do the same. Thank you.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Member-elect for Yellowknife North, Mr. Johnson. Next, we will go to the Member-elect for Nahendeh, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Thompson, the floor is yours.

#### MR. SHANE THOMPSON'S SPEECH

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. I would like to congratulate everyone here for all your hard work to be able to represent your riding and being the ridings' voice. As well, I'd like to thank everyone who put their name forward to run for these same positions. It takes a lot of commitment to put your name forward for public office. I am very excited and look forward to working with you all for the next four years.

I would like to personally thank the residents of the Nahendeh for allowing me into their homes to discuss what we need to work on for the next four years. Each of the six communities have similar and unique issues, and I will share some of them here today with you. I would like to thank them for allowing me to represent them for a second term. It is a very humbling experience, and I would like to thank them from the bottom of my heart.

To my team and family, thank you for all your support, advice, and encouragement as we move forward.

Colleagues, this is a summary of what I heard that we need to work on for the next four years. I will try

to keep it high-level where possible, but some of my returning colleagues will know I do get into the weeds a little bit sometimes.

Working with Indigenous governments moving forward. The region would like to see the Government of the Northwest Territories come to some resolution with the outstanding claims and processes, especially in the Nahendeh Dehcho First Nation and Acho Dene. In speaking with regional leadership, we have not seen any improvements over the past four years and it seems to be going backwards in some cases, especially in the Nahendeh.

We need to build on relationships. We need to make it a point to sit down and listen to what the people have to say and share. Hearing and listening to the people often require creativity in addressing concerns, issues, and challenges. Building relationships is a cornerstone to serving, which fosters respectful, trusting relationships, which then builds healthier and more productive communities.

Personal and professional integrity is built on trusting relationships. Trust and respect are not entitlements; they are earned. We need do our utmost to be honest and forthright in working through solutions to address their issues and concerns and be authentic and transparent throughout the progress. Delivery of authentic services to people is not delivered in lip service or a box that can be checked off, or saying we consulted and are trying, when in fact we did not. Service to people is not a cookie-cutter approach; personal and professional integrity needs to be the guidepost.

I feel the Indigenous governments' processes need to be completed, which will create certainty for industry and investment in the North.

Colleagues, we need to work towards the well-being and self-reliance of our people and our communities, valuing our knowledge keepers, as I just recently found out, instead of calling them elders, by listening to them, paying special attention to their traditional knowledge and meeting their needs for care in the NWT.

We need to continue to invest with partners in infrastructure that enhances our well-being as individuals, situation as the long-term facilities; making homes more energy efficient, which would include increasing funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance. The 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly increased their budget to enhance the work that they are currently doing. I look at the success they have had in small communities, such as Jean Marie River, where they helped the band and homeowners become more

energy efficient. This needs to be done for all communities.

NWT Housing needs to work with small community governments to establish a year-round maintenance program for looking after the knowledge keepers in their homes. It's horrendous when you go into these people's homes and they don't have the support there to fix their homes.

Work with the federal government to make better use of the Nutrition North program for the communities. Each community should be able to access this program, especially in the North.

Social services positions for elders. We talk about our elders, but we don't have a support system in place. We need to create a bill and positions to help them. They are our foundation, and we need to respect that.

Increase homecare positions in the communities. This will help create jobs and help look after our most vulnerable people.

Relook at the seniors' fuel subsidy issue and add funds to it, instead of giving a pot and just dividing it as we create uses for it.

The Mackenzie Valley Highway road to Whati needs to be completed first and foremost. This will have an impact on all of the smaller communities, and we have to understand this is how our residents move forward.

Lease payments need to be reduced from 5 percent to 3 percent. I know we started out at 10 percent last sitting, and we got to 5 percent, but we need to go to 3 percent. We need to reduce the cost of living for all residents. When you are looking at elders and they are sitting there and having to pay over \$3,000 for a home for the lease payments; not cool, so we need to work on that to reduce that.

Equity lease issues need to be resolved in the next four years. This has been ongoing, and as people, my colleagues, have heard, I spoke up in this House about this. In my riding, it's 26, and my colleague's from the Deh Cho, it's 46. People are being put into a situation where the government is not honouring their commitment.

Highway No. 1 needs to be completed, and what I mean by that is chipsealing from Fort Providence all the way to Wrigley. I understand the struggles that some of the bigger centres have with their highways, but come drive down our highway. See what gravel roads are like. I have to give credit to the staff and the contractors who look after those highways. They do a great job with what they are given, but we need to fix this. Similarly, Highway No. 7, we need to complete the chipsealing process on that road. We need to enhance that because



there are some opportunities now happening in the Deh Cho and the Nahendeh, and we need to help make sure the infrastructure is there so that the residents can benefit from it.

Colleagues, we need to respond to the NWT residents for safe and affordable housing and address the homelessness issue. Public housing units have a long waiting list and no new infrastructure occurring. When you see new buildings built, old buildings get torn down. We need to use those buildings to help our homelessness situation. We need to work with the federal government to access Indigenous housing funding for Indigenous governments; not the territorial government but Indigenous governments. We need to work with local governments to come up with creative ways to address housing issues. They can be creative and develop housing solutions for their residents with this funding. They have answers, and let's work with them.

We need to work on elder housing so that their homes are enhanced and maintained to allow the elders to age in place. Elders a lot of times do not want to leave their home community, so we need to ensure we give them that opportunity.

For the smaller communities, we need to build fourplexes where elders can be taken care of in the comfort of their own home communities. They are the knowledge keepers. We hear it. They are the ones who hold the history and the culture, and we need to respect them, and we need to build these homes in there, especially for elders who are stage 1 and stage 2 care. Stages 3 to 5, we need medical services, and we do not have that presently for that, so we need to understand that.

We have to be realistic. Our debt is \$1.1 billion, and it's getting closer to our debt ceiling of \$1.3 billion. This is our reality, so we need to do things differently. I heard from residents who would like to see the Finance Minister reach out to Northerners to hear their concerns and their ideas on how to improve the GNWT economy and how to utilize the budgets as best we can. This will allow us to develop creativity in spending the \$1.9 billion. Departments need to do zero-based budgeting to eliminate redundancy and duplication of services in the system. The 19 Members of the Legislative Assembly need to implement a "can-do" approach with the understanding that we are working for the residents of the Northwest Territories. In true consensus government, it's about working together for the betterment of our residents.

Contracts need to be awarded to northern contractors for the economy to grow and flourish in the North. Northern contractors provide employment for Northerners and skills development. These contractors are not only

invested in local economy, but in our communities, as many of our contractors are residents themselves. In other words, we need to fix the business incentive program, known as BIP. This program used to be used on all contracts, but somehow it was decided that it would be capped. Colleagues, we see large contracts going south with limited benefit to Northerners. One example was the project on Highway No. 1. The southern company was awarded the contract for roughly \$14.5 million, and we did not see very much left behind. We saved a little bit of money on the contract, but what was the impact on the other areas. Again, it's about the residents.

We need to develop infrastructure and the economy in a way that we can support a positive future for our people and our land. We need creative ways to enhance tourism outside of the larger centres. Northerners offer a rich and diverse cultural and traditional perspective and experience, coupled with the incredible untouched landscape that few people have the pleasure of enjoying. Unfortunately, the larger centres are the only places many of our tourists are able to visit because of the undeveloped northern tourism industry.

Moving forward, I would like to see the GNWT develop more green projects, such as geothermal, LNG, solar, and other creative ways to reduce the demand on diesel. It is essentially about working with the communities to come up with a plan that meets their needs as well as using modern technology to enhance existing systems we currently have in place. We have a perfect example in the community of Fort Providence, where SSI Energy has developed a system using modern technology to reduce the use of diesel fuel, utilizing the waste heat for the business. This is an idea that reduces their costs. We need to work with these types of innovators. I believe the utilization of green energy products would enhance the local economy. If you look at geothermal, not only does it operate the power plant, but the heat can be used to heat buildings and greenhouses where we could grow our own food. This creates more employment opportunities and careers, lowers the cost of living in the community, and makes the community more self-reliant.

Last Assembly, we saw an increase in the small community employment fund, which saw new employment opportunities in the smaller communities. However, it is not enough. We need to develop strategic spending which will stimulate employment opportunities, such as homecare, and special projects which are driven by the communities, like work on the access roads and firebreaks, which will help stimulate their economy.

It is about diversifying and improving economic opportunities to encourage community self-reliance

and provide local employment through traditional industries, such as arts, culture, small businesses, mining, fisheries, and tourism, as I mentioned before. It's about strategically spending in the region, working with the local governments on projects that will get people to work and be productive citizens. By working on addressing smaller communities, it helps regional centres and it helps the City of Yellowknife. It's the old analogy: you work on your weakest part of it; it makes the whole team better. By doing that, working with the small communities, it does help enhance this.

Colleagues, we need to provide education and training that provides children, youth, and adult learners opportunities for positive contributions to society and meaningful employment.

We need to review and address the education funding formula we are using. It needs to be fixed to ensure all divisional education councils and school staffs have the necessary tools and funding in place to help our students. Divisional boards should not have to look for almost 30 percent of their operational budget outside the department, and this is what's happening in the Deh Cho.

I have to personally thank the staff for doing an amazing job, the divisional staff and teachers, being able to do what they are doing with the resources they have. I have been very fortunate. My children and I have been through this education system. It is an amazing system, but it needs to be fixed in certain areas.

We need to put our students and communities first by offering local skills and trades training that will reduce our needs for importing skilled labourers. We need to promote and stress trades and apprenticeships.

We need to develop a physical literacy strategy for the schools and communities. We need to focus on prevention and people's well-being. We are behind the rest of Canada in this area.

Being respectful of the time, I will try to summarize some of the remaining ideas that I have heard for the past four years and on the campaign trail.

We need to finally address the municipal infrastructure shortfall. We need to start reducing the gap by at least \$3.3 million a year for the next four years. This will help municipalities start addressing their concerns. As part of the process, we need to work with the municipalities to develop a capital plan that is realistic and they are aware of O and M costs for these new facilities.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs needs to work with the federal government to develop an ability for the smaller communities, especially the designated authorities, to use the

CIP and gas tax funding for community projects that they need and maybe a part of the funding to help run the facility and for program staff. We need to explain that every facility being built has an O and M cost and it comes down to that they have limited funds that they receive from the federal government and territorial government. They do not have the ability to raise funds through taxation like some of the bigger centres.

We need to continue to strengthen our human resources capacity across the public service. We need to build up their skills so that they can move up the corporate ladder should they wish. We need Northerners in positions that are looking after Northerners for Northerners, and we need to understand the importance of that.

We need to have a budget line for each department for summer students, and we need to have the ability to share with our municipal governments to give our youth the opportunity to get meaningful employment in the summertime, to help them get positive work experience and funding to go back to school. As well, this would be another way of supporting our youth and our future.

Medical travel policy needs to be reviewed; \$18 a day for meals is not right. Tell me where you can get a good meal for \$18. You can go to McDonald's, maybe. These are people who are going on medical travel, and we are not looking after them properly.

We also need to look at the time, about the opportunity for people to drive instead of flights. We also have to look at non-medical travel escorts and the work that they do because they are sometimes not family members who are stepping up to look after our sick and the elderly.

Finally, decentralization needs to be looked at. These positions, they are positions that should be in the region, but they are in headquarters. This puts an additional barrier to the government operations and slows down process. There are several examples of this, and I have seen them in the past few years. As well, I believe with modern technology in place, there are positions out there that could be decentralized.

Each community in the Nahendeh does have a list of things we need to work on, but, with everybody's permission here, I would like to be able to submit the list for the Hansard and have it deemed as read. In closing, I would like to thank my former colleagues from the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Your help, your assistance, and your support was greatly appreciated. I have learned a lot from you. The scary thing is I have gone from being a rookie to a knowledge-keeper in four short years. It is exciting

and scary at the same time. Thank you, my colleagues.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Deeming a portion of your speech read, that is a procedural trick from a wily veteran, but we will make it so, Mr. Thompson.

**MR. THOMPSON:** What I heard that we need to work on in the next four years:

#### Fort Simpson

- Develop a plan to build a bridge over the Liard River
- Nutrition North program for the community
- Increase funding for the Small Community Employment Program
- Indigenous housing
- Social service positions for elders
- Increase homecare positions in the community
- Address the Seniors Fuel Subsidy issue
- Work on fixing the funding formula for schools
- Address the municipal funding shortfall
- Work with village to address the bank erosion issue
- Continue working with Dehcho First Nation
- Work on energy pilot project for Fort Simpson
- Work on medical travel and non-medical escorts
- Build a new long-term care facility (new jobs)
- Work on energy pilot project for Fort Simpson
- Develop a better partnership with the band and DHSSA on mental health, addictions (after care and on the land) as well as victim services
- Continue to address the land lease issues (equity and recreational)
- Receive, review, and advocate for constituents' issues, territorial and federal
- Continuously being responsive to your needs

#### Fort Liard

- Increase funding for the Small Community Employment Program
- Social service positions for elders

- Increase homecare in the community
- Address the Seniors Fuel Subsidy issue
- Indigenous housing
- Work on LNG and geothermal pilot projects
- Work on fixing the funding formula for schools
- Continue to address the taxation Issue
- Continue to work on enhancing Highway No. 7
- Fibre-optic link access
- Address the municipal funding shortfall
- Local housing authority facility and new positions
- Receive, review, and advocate for constituent issues, territorial and federal
- Ensure bills are reflective of the wishes and needs of the Nahendeh riding
- Continuously being responsive to your needs

#### Jean Marie River:

- Increase funding for the Small Community Employment Program
- Increase homecare in the community
- Address the Seniors Fuel Subsidy issue
- Indigenous housing
- Agriculture (farm) pilot project to be built more self-sufficient with a community farm
- Work with Nutrition North to access the program
- Continue to work on enhancing the access road
- Highway No. 1 chipsealing project, an additional 20 km outside the community
- Address the municipal funding shortfall
- Four-plex for elders. New health cabin (community owned)
- Work with the community on the sawmill project
- Receive, review, and advocate for constituent issues, territorial and federal
- Continuously being responsive to your needs

## Nahanni Butte:

- Increase funding for the Small Community Employment Program
- Fencing around the airport to stop the buffalo from getting on the runway
- Increase the number of buffalo tags
- Work on the buffalo issue in the community
- Increase homecare in the community
- Address the Seniors Fuel Subsidy issue
- Indigenous housing
- Continue to work on distance education
- Work with the RCMP to have a better presence in the community, including a crew trailer and boat
- Continue to enhance and straighten the access road
- Address the municipal funding shortfall
- Four-plex for elders
- Receive, review, and advocate for constituents' issues, territorial and federal
- Continuously being responsive to your needs

## Sambaa K'e

- Increase funding for the Small Community Employment Program
- Increase homecare in the community
- Work on elders' house renovations
- Address the band land issue
- Address the Seniors Fuel Subsidy issue
- Indigenous housing, last one built 2008
- Work with Nutrition North to help the community access the program
- Continue to work on enhancing the access road and work on develop an all-weather road
- Get the power plant moved to the old airport strip
- Government service officer, contract with the band
- Address the municipal funding shortfall

- Four-plex for elders
- Work on the runway issues
- Department of MACA / Infrastructure to help use CPI and gas tax funding and improve communication
- Work on the community gym project
- Enhance education for home ownership
- Continuously being responsive to your needs

## Wrigley:

- Increase funding for the Small Community Employment Program
- Creation of government service officer position
- Address the senior fuel subsidy issue
- Indigenous housing
- Look at the feasibility to build an all-weather road from Ndulee crossing to Fort Providence
- Work with Nutrition North to access the program
- Work on getting a written commitment to provide funding for training with the Mackenzie Valley Highway Project
- Working with the GNWT to get maximum benefit with the Mackenzie Valley project
- Address the municipal funding shortfall
- Four-plex for elders
- Develop a monthly schedule for social services to come into the community, helping young parents
- Address and fix the reallocation of band lands from the old community site to the new community
- Continue to address the housing commitment from the federal government (1960's)
- Work with the band to access the CPI and gas tax funding from the Department of MACA
- Receive, review, and advocate for constituent issues, territorial and federal
- Continue being responsive to your needs.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):**  
 Colleagues, next we have the Member-elect for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson. The floor is yours, Mr. Jacobson.

## MR. JACKIE JACOBSON'S SPEECH

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Mercer. I would like to thank the good Lord for making a way for me to represent my people here at the Legislative Assembly. I would like to thank all of the people in my riding who put their trust in me to be here to represent them.

In my one month of door-knocking and home visits and stuff like that to the communities, the problems and the priorities I have for Nunakput are identifying housing solutions for our housing problems and shortages in our communities; advocate for health and social impacts, with our people who are travelling with escorts and for families who are not able to afford travel when somebody is sick in the hospital from our communities; education, our post-secondary education social passing has to stop; it's a rippling effect right through our government and right through the system; assure and monitor responsible resource development; monitor and secure viable work plans for climate change, shoreline erosion, and safe responsible transportation services; wildlife and traditional land management, working with our Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and our local governments; cultural and traditional resources; work together to support and maintain good working relationships with local community governments.

My riding has many issues. We are seeing effects from climate change. We live it every day, climate change, seeing it sooner than anyone else, impacting our lives, those who live in Nunakput. Tuktoyaktuk's shoreline is falling into the ocean, and people are having to move, but, Mr. Clerk, we are not going to move. I am going to make sure that people who are staying on the north side of the community are going to stay in their homes, and this government is going to make a way to fix that shoreline.

From the few decades of changing weather means hunters cannot trust the ice, cannot get much for our families; the barges are delayed, meaning we cannot build homes, stock up on our food plan for the winter. Cost of living is higher in Nunakput than anywhere else in this territory. It keeps going up and up. We have to work with our local stores or the federal government to provide proper pricing and proper help for the smaller communities on the coast.

We need to know our problems. We need to stop studying them and start acting on it. We need to help people work. The oil and gas moratorium is hurting our communities in the whole delta. There is nothing going on up there, and we need work. We have to work with our federal government to get this moratorium lifted with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and to be able to get to our resources

because we are resource rich and cash poor. The Beaufort Delta is using up to reduce the power and heating in our communities right now. It's getting to the federal government and getting it sorted out for the whole region. Nothing is happening. We have to work with the federal government to get our gas to market. We need safe and reliable transportation services in our communities, fuel costs and sending up clean fuel so we are not in the situation that we are in right now for the last two years. We have nine months of winter. That is nine months of proper planning that you could do and four months of shipping. That has to get sorted out. It affects us when we are travelling on the land. It's costing us more and more to go further, so the gas prices, that has to change, also.

We know the highway to Tuktoyaktuk, almost 8,000 tourists drove that road this year alone, but there is nothing for them to do. Our government is downloading on the local community government, the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, to provide services that they should be providing, where they provide them everywhere in the Northwest Territories, but where we stand coming out of O and M for the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, it's not right. That has got to stop. Our local economies have to grow. People are trying to start small businesses. When they come into the community, all they do, it's like a fishbowl. They go around, they drive, and they head back to Inuvik, and they stay in Inuvik. We are trying to make small businesses be able to create jobs and employment and to work together to get that sorted out with our government.

Our housing. The housing issues that we have in our riding, big theme: we have young families that are growing. I had 24 graduates this year in Tuktoyaktuk. Where are they going to go, young families? We have no housing. We have to get CMHC and the federal government onside to get the increases in the housing per community, per capita. We get \$32,000 per person per year. Not all of it is being distributed properly. It has to be distributed across the territory. Housing is the biggest concern for me. We have mould. We have people overcrowding. You get water once a week or twice a week in some houses; a family of 10. We have to change. Things have to change. The 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly is change. Our housing issues, to make it easier for houses to be built.

Our education. Social passing has to stop. It has a rippling effect right across the territory. It has a rippling affect from K to 12. We have to work with our community DAs to work and get that done. I've been sitting on a DA for the last three years. I've seen how the rippling effect happens, the social passing across the territory.

I always say, "What's good for Yellowknife is good for Nunakput." We provide the courses for the

programs that we need for education. We need to have our own social workers, our teachers, our nurses. Those positions need to be filled by our own people. We say we're so good at the start. Let's get them trained up. Then, when they're trained, they can't get hired. That has to stop.

The healthcare system, a big concern in my riding. People are having to leave for medical appointments on a day's notice, sometimes, not even given notice. They should be properly told when they're travelling. It's a big thing, because when you're leaving coastal communities, you have to leave one or two days early. It's the same thing coming back. You're going to one appointment; it's costing you six days of your life. Medical travel from Inuvik to Yellowknife or Edmonton, elders and escorts, that has to get fixed and streamlined so that, when you're calling the Minister, something is going to get done that day, approval.

We shouldn't put our elders in that situation, where they are stressed out from what they're having to deal with already. We're giving them more stress; that's not right. The appointments and the aftercare that we're giving them when they travel for cancer, all these treatments, they have to get properly treated, proper follow-up.

We need to deal with one of the biggest concerns that I have, too, and I have been hearing more and more. We need more programming for men, women, and our youth in our communities, not just Band-Aid solutions. We need a men's night, or a ladies' night; something where they are gathering together, some kind of programming that they could go to, a number that they could call anytime to get help.

Our youth. Our youth are left behind. You never hear anything on youth. For our sporting events, we're lucky in Tuktoyaktuk. You can drive out on the road. You go to try to fly out of the community of Sachs Harbour or Paulatuk, you could probably buy three tickets from Yellowknife to Edmonton with one trip from those communities. Shame on us. We have to fix it. Youth are our future, in our territory.

We need places for treatment, and it's not going to be lip service. The 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly has to get treatment for our people in our communities. We need that. We have drug and alcohol addictions, we have stronger drugs coming into the communities, we have to work with that and let the people know, let them know what happens, the side effects that they have to deal with. On-the-land treatment centres, what they had in the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly that we did try, it was just put off to the wayside. "No, we're going to send them south." You can't send them south and think they're going to get fixed when they come home. They have to be fixed; we have to take

care of our own people. We need a drug and alcohol centre in the territory.

We need to work with the regional governments for land management and harvesting, for our grandchildren. We will stay connected with our past, and working with our local community governments. That's the biggest one we've been hearing the last couple of days. We have to work with governments, our local governments. They were here first. To support and build solutions and create a working-together, open-handed approach. We need to work with all levels and support them.

I have a lot of issues for Nunakput. I'm here to advocate for my riding, for Nunakput, and I'm here to do the job for the Northwest Territories. It's an honour for me to be here. This is my third term coming up right now. I'm here to get things done, and I look forward to working with all of you, to getting all the issues that we have to work together to get done for our great territory of Northwest Territories.

I'd like to thank my wife for her support. I'm blessed to have you. I just want to say, I always used to have little slogans: live the present, honour the past, create the future. Let this 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly be remembered as getting the job done for the people. Thank you.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Member-elect for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson. Members-elect, I think we have time for one more before we break for lunch. I'll turn the floor over, then, to the Member-elect for Range Lake, Ms. Cochrane.

#### MS. CAROLINE COCHRANE'S SPEECH

**MS. COCHRANE:** Thank you. Colleagues, I'm going to begin by thanking the constituents of Range Lake for re-electing me as your MLA. I also want to acknowledge my incredible campaign team. Without them, I wouldn't be here today. I want to officially congratulate every Member-elect in the House today. Good job; we're all here, we have a lot of work to do. Welcome.

This is a historical Assembly in that, for the first time in the history of the Northwest Territories, we have a gender-balanced Assembly. Women in my riding talked of the need to increase the number of women in leadership, and we have accomplished this within the Legislative Assembly, but this work is not finished. Women still face glass ceilings in many areas, but we are seeing a change in societal expectations for women, and I'm excited to see what these coming four years will bring.

During my door-knocking, people in masses expressed their concerns for the economy and the

cost of living. They talked about the need to diversify and build on our tourism potential and the economic potential of continuing with the Polytechnic University, but the majority of the people and businesses in my riding talked about the need to invest more in our mineral resources sector and finish the outstanding land claims to be able to move forward.

We know we are in a downturn in the mineral resources sector. We talk about the end of life of our diamond mines, but if we don't start investing now we are not looking at 10 to 15 years to the end of our main economic driver; we are talking about many, many more years till we see an increase in this sector. Mines are not just suddenly found by explorers out looking; it takes many years from the time a prospector finds a potential site till the mines are actually built and in operation.

Colleagues we don't have time to wait anymore. We need to invest now to ensure that, in 15 years, we have other opportunities to support our residents. The last Assembly passed the Mineral Resources Act, and I believe we need to make the development of regulations for this act an immediate priority for this government. The development of these regulations is critical for the mining industry, the Government of the Northwest Territories, Indigenous governments, and many of our businesses and residents. We need to work closely with all stakeholders to ensure the regulations meet the needs of all concerned parties.

Constituents also talked about the need to strengthen our education system, perhaps more so because I am still the Education Minister, but, colleagues, they are right. What's the use of improving our economy if we don't have northern people with the skills to access the employment opportunities?

As well, countries who have invested heavily in education are seeing their economy increase with the production of plumbers, carpenters, nurses, lawyers, entrepreneurs, et cetera. Social issues related to poverty are also lowered, as more people have the skills to get higher-paid employment, which in turn leads to fewer people on income support and less need for public housing.

To address the needs within our education system we also need to increase our parental and family support. Almost half of our children in the Northwest Territories are not developmentally ready when they enter school, and this is not okay. We need a higher focus on pre- and postnatal education and supports so that new parents, young parents, and struggling parents have supports to help them raise their children to be the best they can be.

Once we get our children to the school doors, we need to have appropriate educational supports for them. Schools cannot be allowed to continue to try to address the increasing needs of students with the same, or less, funding. The funding formula in itself will need to be reviewed, as the current formula leaves the potential for schools to fight between themselves for students because the current funding is allocated based on numbers. We need to adequately fund our schools so they can focus on quality education versus focusing on making sure they have enough students to fund their costs. Strengthening our JK to 12 cannot be done by the GNWT alone. We need to work closer with school boards and the Northwest Territories Teachers Association if we are going to get this right and get the buy-in needed to succeed.

We also have huge needs in our postsecondary. Yellowknife needs a campus, as the current rented one is bursting at the seams. Fort Smith and Inuvik have beautiful campuses, but there is a need for adequate student accommodations in those communities. The Government of the Northwest Territories will need to work diligently with our federal counterparts to access funding to support the expansion of our postsecondary facilities.

Colleagues, the last Assembly committed to three strong campuses and three strong communities, and we need to build on the programming and services at each of the campuses, but we can't forget our smallest communities. We currently have 21 community learning centers in communities that also need to be included in the development of our post-secondary. We need to invest in technology and build on our community learning centres so students who are not able to travel can still access some post-secondary courses.

We are implementing the Northern Distance Learning Program into our high schools to address the higher grade levels, and it is working, with our most northern schools now graduating students who have been accepted immediately into post-secondary programs without having to do the upgrading. This program is working within our high schools, so we need to expand it to our post-secondary.

Colleagues, I clearly heard from over 100 students at the three campuses that they wanted to maintain their post-secondary within their own communities and, if we are going to address the educational needs of students, we need to have every community in mind as we continue this journey.

Another major concern I heard from my constituents is the desperate needs within the healthcare system. I have heard from many, many healthcare professionals that they are overworked due to the serious staffing shortages, some even

crying as they shared their stories of desperation. Many feel their voices are not respected and some say that they have literally been silenced by the bureaucracy. This is not okay. All employees and all residents need to have an opportunity to share what they think is working, what is not, and what needs to change.

Within my riding, there is a feeling that we are at a crisis point and this needs to be addressed immediately. We need to hear the concerns of staff and work diligently on a recruitment and retention strategy that focuses on meeting our immediate needs for staffing, acknowledging the current workers who are not feeling appreciated, and increasing our training of northern workers able to take on our healthcare occupations.

The last major issue that was raised by many residents was the need to continue to address the homelessness situation in Yellowknife. To address this, though, we need to increase the number of homes and shelters outside Yellowknife, as the majority of homeless people are from the communities. This is not to keep them out of our capital; this is because people who are struggling and decide to make positive changes to their lives have a better chance for success if they have healthy friends and family close by.

We also need to continue to provide a continuum of care from Housing First, transitional and semi-independent housing, and emergency shelters. No one model fits all, and we need to try to address the needs of all.

Finally we need to address the pain that many people live with every day of their lives. This means an increase in mental health and addictions support in the Northwest Territories, both mainstream programs and within an Indigenous lens, as well.

Colleagues, I could go on. People who know me know I can go on a long time; but the one thing I did stress in my campaign trail is the need to have fewer priorities for this Assembly so we can ensure we are properly addressing the concerns. Within this new Assembly the priorities I personally would like to see include the need to strengthen our economy and complete the land claims, an increase in financial resources to our education system, a strong recruitment/retention plan for needed professionals in all fields, and a continued focus on providing adequate housing for the residents of the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Member-elect for Range Lake, Ms. Cochrane. That brings us almost immediately to 12 noon. We will now take a break for lunch and reconvene at 1:00 p.m. Thank you, Members-elect; we are recessed until 1:00.

---SHORT RECESS

**DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland):** Good afternoon, Members-elect. Welcome back to the Chamber. My name is Glen Rutland, and I am the deputy clerk, House Procedures and Committees, and I will be chairing the roundtable this afternoon.

First, we will resume the roundtable, with the Member-elect for Hay River North, Mr. Simpson.

#### MR. R.J. SIMPSON'S SPEECH

**MR. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. It's an honour to be back in this House, to serve the people of Hay River and the NWT for a second term. I want to congratulate and welcome all the returning Members and new Members. I've had a chance to speak with most of the new Members, and even though winter is approaching, the sense of renewal in the air makes this feel like a spring Assembly.

Each of the past two elections have brought significant change, and I feel like we are now in a position to begin delivering the change that the voters want to see. It won't be easy. The NWT is facing many challenges. With the collapse of the oil and gas markets, the impending closure of the diamond mines, and a decade-long decline in mining exploration, the overall economic outlook of the NWT is poor, to say the least. While Yellowknife still seems to be somewhat insulated from the current economic downturn, the hard economic times are already being felt in every other region. On top of that, our residents suffer the negative impacts of addiction, family violence, poverty, lack of education, and a variety of other social factors at rates much higher than the rest of Canada.

However, I am optimistic that, if we face the challenges head on and commit to real change, we can overcome these issues and create a foundation that will allow our residents, and the generations to come, to grow and prosper.

Each region faces its own unique challenges that need to be addressed. In Hay River, we're facing a number of ongoing issues that have been ongoing for a number of years and negatively affect our health and safety, our children's education, and economic viability.

I've heard more concerns about our healthcare system than anything else during my four years as an MLA. Despite being able to attract nurses and physicians, the Hay River Health Authority is unable to retain them, resulting in a revolving door of locums and a seemingly constant staff shortage. This negatively affects patient care, and many people are terrified of getting seriously ill in Hay River. It's not that the staffs don't want to live in Hay River; a number of them have commented that they



love the town and want to stay, but they just can't work at the Authority.

This is simply unacceptable. Our facilities should not be driving staff away. The concerns are growing because not only does Hay River have the fastest growing population of seniors in the territory, we're also slated to get a new 48-bed long-term care unit. I want to say that this issue needs to be dealt with by this Assembly before it reaches a crisis point, but some believe that we're already there.

The sudden closure of the Hay River high-rise has also highlighted Hay River's housing shortage; and not just social housing, but all types of rental units. The media always talks about the high cost of rent in Yellowknife, but we face the same costs and the loss of the high-rise's 122 units has made it next to impossible to find a place to rent in Hay River, whether you're a doctor or a low-income individual collecting income assistance.

A number of people who had put down roots in Hay River have already been forced to leave the territory and a number of low-income and vulnerable individuals are now living on the street or in unsafe conditions. As we all know, housing shortages exacerbate all other problems. It makes it nearly impossible to attract new residents, which prevents businesses from being able to grow and can prevent vacant positions, such as those at the health centre, from being filled.

What is most frustrating about this shortage is that there is a plan to alleviate it, and that plan has been waiting in the wings for quite some time. The problem is that the GNWT has been short-changing Hay River by millions of dollars per year in infrastructure funds, as determined by the GNWT's own funding formula. As a result, the town doesn't have the financial means to put in the road, water, and sewer infrastructure that is needed before new lots can be developed.

This municipal funding shortfall needs to be addressed in a significant way in this Assembly. A commitment to do so was made in the last Assembly, but we failed to deliver. In the meantime, the GNWT needs to step up and work with the town to make this development happen. With the potential for Pine Point Mines, Aurora Pellets, a 48-bed long-term care facility, and a new fish processing plant, Hay River's economy and population are actually poised to grow; it's one of the few places in the NWT that can say that. If just 200 people move to Hay River as a result of this growth, which is far less than predicted, the GNWT would receive another \$6.5 million dollars a year in federal transfer payments. However, instead of facilitating this, the GNWT has been ignoring these opportunities to the detriment of Hay River, the NWT, and the government itself.

Another issue that has been discussed in this assembly by a number of previous MLAs from Hay River, but has yet to be addressed, is dredging. Hay River came into existence because of its strategic location on the Great Slave Lake. Having a safe port that can be traversed by vessel of all sizes is essential for the safety of our residents, and it's essential for our economy. The build-up of silt is getting to the point where many people believe it threatens the viability of the shipping and fishing industries. There is also concern that, at some point, the state of the port could also cause the Coast Guard to relocate operations to Yellowknife. Given the centralization that we've seen over the years, this doesn't seem unlikely. We can't allow this problem to reach a crisis point; we have to stop being so reactive and start looking beyond this fiscal year.

I noted that Hay River has some real economic potential. Unfortunately, that's looking years into the future, and right now we're facing difficult economic times, like most other places in the territory.

This Assembly needs to do more to promote economic diversification and keep money in the North. One of the easiest ways to do this is to make sure we spend as much of our own public funds as we can within the territory. Each year, the GNWT spends hundreds of millions of dollars on infrastructure, but efforts to make sure that that money goes to northern firms who employ northern residents have all but disappeared. This is low-hanging fruit. This isn't money we need to attract to the North; we just have to make sure we don't send it south. If we want to pay people to work and help them get training, instead of subsidizing their housing and providing income assistance, then we need to ensure that we keep funds in the territory.

There are a number of ways we can do this. For example, we can break larger contracts into smaller ones so that northern companies can compete with southern firms, and we can make better use of negotiated contracts, which have proven very successful at providing local employment and training. We also need to begin to ensure that these large P3 mega projects start delivering more employment and training benefits to Northerners, instead of just paying lip service to that idea. If we can do it with small negotiated contracts, we can do it with P3s.

If Members wish to learn more about how we can derive greater benefits from the GNWT's procurement process, I recommend that you look up the report on government procurement done by the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly's Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment.

There was a lot of talk about economic diversification in the last Assembly. Unfortunately,

despite numerous strategies and action plans, I saw very little action and I see very little in terms of results. Costs for small businesses remain high and, along with red tape, they are increasing. The government needs to understand its role when it comes to the economy. Instead of creating plans that tell entrepreneurs what to do, we need to create partnerships with industries and small businesses, actually listen to them, and work with them to implement solutions that will yield results.

Also, the government needs to step back from its incursion into parts of the private sector. In and around Hay River, the GNWT now does things such as manufacturing, general contracting, and highway maintenance; all things that have traditionally been the domain of the private sector. It's bad enough that northern companies have to deal with high costs and with southern firms who undercut them; they shouldn't have to worry about the GNWT taking work away from them.

While I strongly believe that diversification is important, I don't discount the importance or potential of mining and oil and gas, and we must continue to promote and pursue investment in these areas. However, we can no longer ignore the criticisms of industry. We must streamline our regulatory environment so that the laws governing non-renewable resource activity are clear and expectations and timelines are reasonable for all parties, while at the same time maintaining the stringent environmental protections that are built into our legislation, because resource development and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive.

While we do this, we need to keep in mind that the GNWT does not have sole authority over the land. We must ensure that, as we move forward with legislative development, Indigenous governments are included. Again, I recommend to the new Members that they look up the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment's report on the development of devolution legislation and carefully consider those recommendations.

In order to help facilitate some of this resource development, we need the infrastructure to make it a reality, and I join many of my colleagues today in calling for the completion of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. The highway would bring economic opportunities to communities up and down the valley, expand tourism, attract billions in investment, and drastically change the fortunes of the territory.

I would also like this Assembly to consider taking a new approach to economic development in small communities. As my colleagues are aware, many small communities don't have the same opportunities to develop local economies that we

have in larger centres. I believe that we need to start partnering with local and Indigenous governments with the goal of developing local industries that are sustainable. Fort MacPherson Tent and Canvas is a perfect example. It's the largest private employer in the community and manufactures a product that is desirable around the world. A similar model could be used in communities to set up industries that capitalize on their natural advantages, or a completely new approach can be developed. Regardless, we have to try something different because the current approach is failing.

One of my former colleagues who represented a number of small communities would often talk at length about how a single job in a community could have a large impact that spread beyond a single individual. For example, he would note that sometimes the reason a child wouldn't go to school is because the parents didn't have a job to go to so they wouldn't get up in the morning to take their kid to school. However, even if we create a job in the community, that child's parents could be dealing with addictions issues that prevent them from holding that job. This exemplifies one of the biggest challenges we face. All the issues that we are facing are interrelated, and there is no one way to fix a problem without addressing all of the other issues that feed into it. That's why, when we look at things like building economies or improving the education system, we have to take a more holistic approach than we've done in the past. We can no longer allow government departments to operate in silos, and we need to build strong partnerships with local governments. The old way of doing business has proven not to be effective, and I hope this Assembly supports a real change to the status quo approach that we've seen in the past.

I mentioned education, and I truly believe that education is the most powerful tool we have to change the fortunes of the territory and the best way to insulate ourselves against the boom and bust of mining and oil and gas and to reduce our dependence on government. We need to make a concerted effort to provide better education so that future generations will fare better than us.

There's a lot of concern about the diamond mines closing, but we've had them for decades and we're still facing an uneven distribution of wealth and a number of social problems, so clearly mines alone are not the solution. I personally believe that education is freedom. If you have a university degree, or are a journeyman, you probably don't need social housing or a lot of other social services. So not only is the government not spending money on you, you're probably contributing to the economy, which means there's more money to provide better social services to other people who need them. I strongly believe that what we need is

a concerted government-wide effort to provide an education to our youth that will provide them with that freedom. That means developing and implementing an education strategy from the ground up and with grassroots input, buy in, and support, that focuses on everything from prenatal care through early childhood, JK to grade 12, post-secondary, and even on-the-job training. There has to be that continuum from before a child is born until after they get a job. The top-down approach that we're used to seeing has not been working in the territory.

I've mentioned partnerships a number of times, and that speaks to the uniqueness of our territory. While we have a territory-wide public government, for now, we also have a number of Indigenous governments who, over the coming years, will be drawing down authority over a number of the services that are currently provided by the GNWT. This means that we need to develop programs in conjunction with those governments who will be equal partners in delivering them.

I will also add to the chorus of voices that we've heard today calling on this Assembly to settle all outstanding land claims. We need to get this done, and nothing should be off the table in terms of how we can achieve this. This is a necessity. We must do it.

While I could go on about a number of other issues that we must deal with, and that we will deal with during this Assembly, I will end with a comment on government accountability. This has been a heated topic of discussion among the general public over the past few months, and it's come up in nearly all my conversations with the new Members over the past week. It's clear that the status quo is unacceptable. I believe in consensus government, and I also believe in learning from our mistakes. We owe it to the public to make changes that attempt to address the deficiencies with accountability that we experienced in the last Assembly. What do those changes look like? I'm not sure, but it's a conversation that we need to have.

With all of that said, and with one minute remaining on the clock, I just want to say that I look forward to working with all of the new Members and with the returning members for the benefit of the people of the territory, and I really am excited and I'm optimistic. I have a good feeling that we're going to do great things. Thank you.

**DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next, we will turn to the MLA-elect for the Sahtu, Ms. Chinna.

#### MS. PAULIE CHINNA'S SPEECH

**MS. CHINNA:** Good afternoon. I would like to congratulate my colleagues on a successful campaign and now representing your constituents in your elected ridings.

I would like to take this opportunity also, too, to acknowledge Cece McCauley, who was an advocate for women in leadership and who is also an advocate for the Mackenzie Highway. It's an iconic and historical moment right now that we have nine women who are elected into the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. I would also like to acknowledge Ethel Blondin, who was a mentor and how had held her seat as the MP for the Liberals, and who has mentored me through this process. With her humble experience, she has given me the tools to go forward and to represent my region.

Also, I'd like to thank my region for selecting me to be representing the region as the first Indigenous woman to represent the Sahtu in the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. It's a humbling experience, and it's an honour.

Going forward, I would like to express that the need for my region is huge. We're talking about education and healthcare, looking at economic development, mainly looking at the bridge and the opportunity that it has to offer; looking at tourism from the Tulita bridge and the Mackenzie Highway; and building relationships with our Indigenous groups.

Right now, in Colville Lake, I would like to concentrate on that community because we do have a school system that is existing there right now. The school system is very poor. I have a one-room classroom. We have teachers who are there, who are committed to be there, with no housing. The housing there is limited for water and sewer, and the children are being taught in this environment.

I would also like to look the learning disabilities, as well, in the school system, and looking at filling the positions. I'm familiar with the Jordan Principle, and Tulita and Deline have taken those initiatives into hiring an extra person to be dealing with the ADHD, the AFS, and we also have the Down syndrome students.

I would like to be able to work with the education system in the Sahtu to integrate those students with the school system, because I went into the school and they are kind of left to their own, and they are not incorporated with the rest of the students. I found it really sad to see that, in this day and age, we don't have programs and training for these teachers' assistants who are showing their

commitment to be working with the children with disabilities.

Looking at our healthcare system, during my campaign there was a number of situations and scenarios that were expressed. One of them was, again, from Colville Lake, that there was a child who was severely situation and they had called the health centre in Inuvik and got direction from the doctor to say that their needs were not so severe. The parents ended up driving the child from Colville Lake to Good Hope, which is a three-hour drive; it took them nine hours, and the child was in agony, so much pain. They got to Inuvik. A medevac was called. He was sent to Yellowknife. They didn't have the resources to help the child. Later on, he was sent off to Edmonton. During that time, the child was enduring this pain and was sent to Edmonton, and the doctor in Edmonton said that the child should have been medevac'd directly to Edmonton right from the beginning.

These are the kinds of situations that the community of Colville Lake is experiencing right now. The other thing is that they also have their nurses' facility is probably smaller than the offices that we work in, and those offices, there are three of them and there is a gym that's attached to it, as well. I don't feel that these are adequate facilities for the nurses to be working in. The nurses come in every three months, and I thought right from the people who are suffering from heart disease, diabetes, that they don't get the adequate medical care that they need.

I was looking at prescriptions that they acquire, who delivers them, who sends them in, how we take care of our patients in the Northwest Territories. I know that Colville Lake is not our only isolated community; I think of the communities in Nunakput, as well. I think that together as the Northwest Territories, as a government, as the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, we need to address these concerns and we need to not let them result in death, at the expense that we're not dealing with the scenarios in these situations right now. I feel that the majority of them can be preventable with the proper and adequate care that we need.

I would like to move on to the Tulita bridge. I'm in support of building infrastructure to the capacity. We need these projects in order for our regions and our territory to survive. We need to make the money. We need to get our residents, as well. You know, with these major infrastructure projects comes education and training, as well, and education and training are significant. We need that in order to survive as the Northwest Territories. Projects like this, we need to emphasize on trades. We need to make sure that a lot of our people who are involved in these projects walk out and they actually do have certification. Also supporting our

local business, as well, and not going south in order to pursue these contracts, that we try to keep the money in the Northwest Territories.

I would also like to emphasize on tourism throughout the Northwest Territories. I think there just needs to be a lot more promotion on it and available funding, and how this program actually works. I think that acquiring small businesses in each of our regions, in each of our locations, this will build our capacity, as well, and education needs to be supported among this, as well.

I would like to also comment on our land leasing policy and our projects that we have that are out there currently. I know that we do have housing and our land leasing are in conjunction, and they do go together. Our housing projects don't meet the needs of our residents in the smaller communities, compared to the tax base.

I think also that the land leasing policy also requires that the client needs to have a land lease in order to pursue a Housing Corporation package. Right now, we are leasing at assessed value, at 5 percent annually. Those lease payments could be about \$2,500 or \$3,000, which is not affordable to a person who is on a pension, who is on income support, and who is trying to move and become independent in their own region. I think we should bottle-cap our clients in order for them to go forward. We need to really structure and look at a way that we can deal with these scenarios.

Looking at the community lands and the land development, client change is a significant issue, as well, because there is limited area for the communities to actually expand. Looking within my region, there is limited expansion for each of the communities, because we do sit on a riverbank. With the bridge coming through, it's going to open access to lands that they are not able to access right now, so the development and planning needs to be considered.

I am concerned because it's actually going to open up the access to the Great Bear Lake by Deline, and they are known for their tourism and their fishing, so I would like to look at that and see what we can do as a government to try to protect those areas.

Also, I would like to just touch a little bit on housing and share with you that, during my campaign, I went to Fort Good Hope and I had a conversation with the K'asho Got'ine district, and they actually had a housing initiative that they had taken on between the federal government and the GNWT where they actually deal with their own housing initiatives, and they are actually their independence to go forward and to start housing repairs on behalf of their clients in the region. So I think building

those relationships with our Indigenous groups is important. We need to start really emphasizing on that, because at the end of it they are our economy, they are striving for a land claim, and they are in self-government negotiations right now.

I would like to work towards that, because I would want to see what the government is going to look like once those self-government and land claim settlements are done. What is our responsibility, what are we going to be looking at, and where are we going? Thank you.

**DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Ms. Chinna. Next, I'll pass the floor to the MLA-elect for Thebacha, Ms. Martselos.

#### MS. FREIDA MARTSELOS' SPEECH

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Good afternoon. First of all, I want to congratulate everybody in the House on the newly elected MLAs who will be serving in this 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Bonding and serving with each of you to further our priorities and mandates is key to successfully serving all the people of the Northwest Territories to the very best of our abilities and potential.

I want to thank the amazing community of Fort Smith for giving me the opportunity to serve the riding of Thebacha and the people of the Northwest Territories.

Forming all necessary partnerships with all levels of government, Indigenous governments, local and federal governments, and the private sector is key to success. Solutions and decisions made here affect all people of the North. Being realistic and using common sense is a trait and a positive way of ensure the people of the North are really being served properly.

All my priorities are not rated. I feel that each of my principles and my priorities are all equal in importance. My first principle: supporting true consensus government through empowered communities with strong regional governments. My priority: maintain the promise that Fort Smith remain the education centre of the NWT. Supporting the plan to develop the Polytechnic University / University of the North is vital. We must ensure this is truly a unique university where people across the North, Canada, and the world will want to come to study. This Polytechnic University / University of the North headquarters must remain in Fort Smith.

My second principle: settling of the outstanding land claims of Akaitcho, the Dehcho, and the NWT Metis claim. The priority: we have an obligation to truly walk the talk and seriously support the settlement of these claims to move forward. We must not be an

obstacle, but we must really mediate a settlement that satisfies all parties involved. Land claim settlements are positive economic opportunities not only for the group that settles, but are good for the region and good for the Northwest Territories.

My third principle: balanced economic opportunities. Expansion of the Taltson River Dam is vital to the entire Northwest Territories. This opportunity of green energy is vital. Hydro is the cleanest form of energy. It will create a climate of new opportunities, create new jobs, lower the cost of living, and provide new training opportunities in the trades, which gives new hope to the people of the Northwest Territories.

We must also open up the North to balanced development in partnership with business and our Indigenous partners, and with consultation with the people to improve our economic situation, and use creative new ways of doing business. This must be a priority.

My next principle: development of a social envelope. Priority: creating a universal subsidized childcare program is a must. A full-service territorial addictions centre is vital to address a true northern solution. Develop a process of retention of doctors to serve the communities so proper care is given to our residents. Being creative to ensure this happens must be a priority.

We must develop a plan to address the housing issues of the Northwest Territories. Using creative new ways to use capital dollars must be examined.

Our seniors and elders who paved the way for each of us into today's society must be recognized, and their contribution to all of us must always be a factor in all future decisions.

In closing, together and in true consensus government we have an obligation to the people of the Northwest Territories to set the stage for hope, cooperation, equality, and ensuring the Indigenous issues are truly dealt with. The people of the NWT deserve a sincere, honest version of accountability, transparency, and an open-door policy. Changing the way we do business and using creative ways to find solutions is extremely important.

I want to thank you for giving me an opportunity to state my priorities, and I look forward to ensuring solutions for developing the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly's mandate. Thank you.

**DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Next, I will turn to the MLA-elect for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, Mr. Norn.

## MR. STEVE NORN'S SPEECH

**MR. NORN:** Marci cho, Mr. Clerk. I would like to start by introducing myself. My name is Steve Norn, MLA for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. My home town is Deninu Kue; it's the place where I cut my teeth and where I grew up, and I'm proud to say that I'm happy to represent the riding of Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

I would like to congratulate all the new MLA-elects, and I would also like to mention the three acclaimed Members. You guys look really stressed throughout this whole process.

I want to also thank the voters of the Tu Nedhe-Willideh riding. I found out afterwards that our riding was number two in the voter turnout, 70 percent, which is really good. I'm really proud to say that. We are number two behind my colleague for Nunakput, who is at number one. That just goes to show that people in my riding are really passionate about our politics, and I want to say marci cho to them.

Women in politics. I was raised by my great-grandmother, and my first order of business when I came to the office, I put a picture of my great-grandmother up. I've always been surrounded by very powerful women, and I'm very happy to say I'm flanked by two very influential, powerful women. You are very good role models for our young generation. I'm proud to be standing beside you.

My colleague from Sahtu mentioned Ethel Blondin, and that made me think. You mentioned that name, and all of a sudden it brought me right back. I was in high school and the principal called me in. He said, "Ethel Blondin is rounding up youth from around the North. We're getting this new thing up in Ottawa called the Youth Employment Strategy." I was like, "Why do you want me? I'm going to high school and I'm from Deninu Kue, a skinny little kid." I was like, "I'll jump all over that opportunity, I'll take it. So I did." I always seemed to have these influences around me, and it's like a sign. This is what you are destined to be working at, and I'm so happy to be here, to work with you guys.

I have always said that, whatever government department we have, the working population should always be representative of the population it serves. I think we more than did that with this Assembly.

When I did my door-to-door, you felt helpless because a lot of time during your campaign people poured their hearts out to you, and you felt helpless because you weren't elected at that time. They told you all sort of things, they have all sorts of questions for you, requests, and they are hoping you are their next hope. I am hoping that all the

Members here elected stick to your word; I really hope so.

I also want to say we have job certainty for the next four years. A lot of the people that we met door-to-door do not have that. To me, that doesn't sit right. A lot of that doesn't sit right to me, so we owe it to our constituents, the people who voted for us, to do our best for them.

Also, when I sat down here, someone pointed out to me that this is the Premier's seat, so I won't get too comfortable here.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** This one is.

**MR. NORN:** Oh, this one? It's pretty close.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** You're not stealing it from me.

---Laughter

**MR. NORN:** Okay, good. Well, anyway, I just want to let the House and the people of the North know that I do not intend to run for a Cabinet position. My first duty is to the people of my constituency, and that's what I plan to do. So I wanted to let you guys know firsthand.

I also want to say during my door-to-door, one of our knowledge-keepers asked me a really important question. They asked me: what do you think the spirit and intent of our treaties are? Boy, that just blew me away. It was such a profound question, you know. It made me think because I didn't have an answer right there because, you know, I always was a very cocky young man, thought I had all of the answers. I didn't, though. I was stumped. I did a lot of soul searching, and all of a sudden these glimpses started to pop in my head as I went through my campaign. Here is my glimpse. Here is my paper. I am putting down my paper. I am not looking at my computer.

I had this glimpse of family, it could be around a lake, it could be around the Sahtu, it could be around the Tu Nedhe, of this figure going home, greeting their family, saying, "[English translation not provided]," "I love you" in my language, or it could be a "I love you" in whatever language is in your riding, going up, listening to loved ones, having a couple of rabbits on the back of their shoulders, carrying it in, walking in off the land, sitting down at the kitchen table and talking about their day with their family, speaking in their own language.

There is another image that came to me, this vision I guess you would say. All of a sudden, oh, my God, there is this alarm that went off. This person who had brought in the rabbits put this stethoscope around their head or around their shoulders, "I have to go to work. I am sorry. I have to go to surgery. I have to go. [English translation not provided.]"

Something in your language, give your loved ones a kiss. "I have got to go. I am sorry. Enjoy the rabbits." On the way out in this glass case there is a drum, in this glass case on the way out of the house, there is a sash or a fiddle, moccasins.

We were told here before we came that we should talk about our vision about four years down the road, 10 years down the road. I am talking about this little vision I just spoke of. It could be a hundred years down the road. How good will that feel that far if people are still speaking our language, are being our doctors, our lawyers, our professionals, our engineers? Hopefully we are not spinning our wheels here in the next four years, and doing something about that. So that was my vision, and that really, really kind of gave me the direction where I wanted to go in my campaign.

So now I am going to pick up my paper again. Now, a lot of voters in the last little while, I guess, are going to go through a little bit of voter fatigue. They have already voted us in the House. There are a lot of municipal elections, and now finally we are going to have our federal election, and we are at the mercy of the next government that will be coming to power. I said in my campaign, one of my platform items was for young people to vote: get out and vote. Get out and vote. Get out and vote. I am saying that right now. You have one more election to deal with, so I am telling you again: get out and vote. This is your chance to have your voice be heard and to elect the next government at the federal level. With that being said, we are at the mercy to set our priorities for what is going to happen with that government, as well, so we will see what comes of that. We do not have a crystal ball. We are going to see how that goes.

We were asked what steps the GNWT should take to achieve this vision.

Land claims. We need to settle our land claims. We need to give all of our Indigenous governments some breathing room. For me, I would like to see this government take a, what's the French term, a *laissez-faire*, they call it, a hands-off, give them a little bit of room or a variation of it to give our negotiating teams some chance to get work done. We owe it to our people. We owe it to our businesses. We owe it to the people of the North to do that, get work done. A lot of our elders past have wanted to see a lot of our land claims come to closure, to fruition. I think we owe them, and a lot of them are not getting any younger. I think we owe it to them to see that ratified.

Jobs and economy is something else that I will say I encountered during my talks with constituents. We need to reinvigorate our economy. We are coming at the end of a cycle for mining. We are so dependent on that, you know. I am hoping that we

review a lot of our policies, such as BIP policies, Affirmative Action Policy. We need to take a good, hard look at them because we have got to give our businesses and our people the best chance at opportunity, and we are not doing that. We have not done that in the past Assemblies. Affirmatively, we need to shape these policies to give our businesses the best chance possible to become successful and profitable and self-sufficient. One thing that I did in my research is there is a program in the United States. They call it the 8(a) program. I am hoping we could kind of mirror something like that and implement it here in the Northwest Territories. That is the direction I would like to see our local government go.

Addictions. A lot of you might know already I am a former RCMP officer, and I worked with the Public Prosecution Service of Canada as a witness coordinator. A lot of you do not see this, but I was privy to it. There are many, many, many files of, just, you see all of the pain and suffering, and 99 percent of it is because of alcohol and drugs. It hurts. It hurts me. A lot of you have not had somebody knock at your door at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, young mother, all bloody, holding a baby and pleading for your help. You will never know that pain. It still sits here. Now, sitting here in this House, hopefully we can do something about it by taking more pride in the culture and dealing with addictions, because addictions and problems with alcohol create such a burden on our correctional system, our emergency services, our police. I am hoping that we can do something about that in this Assembly.

I want to say to everybody here, too, that I myself suffered from addictions. I had a problem with alcohol for many, many years, and I am proud to say to you that I have been sober for almost seven years, and I wanted to say to those who are suffering right now with addictions, that there is going to be help out there. There is help out there, and I am going to be doing my very best in this House to help you and to be a good role model.

Another thing that really irked me during my door-to-door was housing. Oh, that is one of the things that really just gave me fuel to my fire during my constituency. I spoke to somebody in one of our communities, and he said, "Steve, I wish you could help us out, you know. We went to NWT Housing, and we applied for a program to renovate our home. It won't even cost more than a few thousand dollars to fix our windows, fix our doors, and it would have saved us X amount of dollars in fuel savings." We talked about cost saving and stuff like that, and they told me that, "You know what, we were denied. We have to go through so many hoops, and we went through four or five times, and we were denied every single time." I am like, "Where's the disconnect here?" We are talking

about policy, a procedure that they fell through the cracks and all of sudden you are not going to help this person, one, keep them warm in winter and two, help them save money, a simple fix. Hopefully, we can look at some of those things while we are in this House.

I have heard like a chorus line now, just coming to me now, that we are talking about policies. That is where we need to start and take a look at it. I am not saying we should take a machete to it and take a hard-line approach, but we need to just work with our governments, with our bureaucratic system, with our people at all levels of governments, work together and have good common-sense approaches, humanize our policies, and let's not forget our people at the grass-roots level.

In closing, I am proud to be here. I would like to say that I hope we work all in collaboration. I like to use the word "synergy" because I think that really captures how we need to work with each other because, if one of us drops the ball, it means we all drop the ball, so we should all help each other with our issues and help people of the North, because they're depending on us.

I want to thank my family, my friends, people who are supporting me. I want to thank Alfred for being a role model to me, because it wasn't too long ago we were sitting in the office, and we were joking, and now we're here. I'm humbled, and I'm proud to be sitting with you. Mahsi cho.

**DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Norn. Next, the floor shall go to the MLA-elect for Yellowknife Centre, Ms. Green.

#### MS. JULIE GREEN'S SPEECH

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. I want to start by acknowledging that I'm on Chief Drygeese territory, and I'm honoured to be here. I am also proud to represent Yellowknife Centre. I am here as the voice for a very diverse community downtown that has a diversity of issues and a diversity of incomes.

My vision is to provide people with the tools to realize their full potential, and I am going to go through what some of those tools are, starting with the economy. The very best thing we can do for ourselves to start with is to settle land rights negotiations and self-government negotiations. There is a way forward, using the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. This Assembly has recognized and supported that declaration, but the next step is to implement it and make it meaningful in our land rights negotiations and line up our position with the federal position and with the position of the Indigenous government organizations.

I really feel that not just adopting but implementing UNDRIP, as it's called, will provide Indigenous government organizations with control over their land and their government, for development or conservation purposes, but in any case it would provide land certainty. The result of that would be good for the Northwest Territories, and it would be good for our primary industry, which is mining; and it is my hope that mining continues to be our primary industry, to the extent that we have any control over it.

I recognize that commodity markets are not within our control. Attracting investment is not within our control, and we can see that with the fact that we have two mines that are fully permitted that are not being built because either the commodity prices are too low or they can't attract the investment.

There are ways for us to assist in exploration, specifically through the Mining Incentive Program. That program returns \$5 for every dollar invested, and the government could certainly do more by putting money into that.

We also need to take a better look at diversification. I talked about this in my last speech, but the need for it is even greater now than it was before, and there are three areas that I've talked about consistently here. The first is tourism. Tourism has been a very successful industry in Yellowknife and in the Northwest Territories generally, and it is time for us to share the infrastructure dollars that we're currently putting into roads with tourism. We need a visitor centre here in Yellowknife. We need more campgrounds and more parks for road traffic to visit. We need more money into product diversification so that the tourists who come here spend more time here and spend more money. Tourism, I know, doesn't pay like the mines, but it is still a growing segment of our economy and it needs more investment.

The second area with many benefits is retrofits. If we could retrofit public housing, private housing, commercial office space, we would derive three kinds of benefits; jobs, a reduction in greenhouse gas emission, and a reduction in utility bills. There are studies that have been done that give a lot of detail about the return on investment; it's impressive and it's necessary, and we need to look at it very seriously. It addresses a number of issues that are important to all of us.

The third area, which is an economic area but also obviously a social development area, is childcare. Childcare is another area in which there are three distinct benefits. The first is jobs; the second is enabling parents to go back to the workforce after they finish their parental leave; and the third is the development of the children themselves so that



they are ready for school when they enter junior kindergarten.

An investment in childcare is essential, and it's worth noting again that 11 of 33 communities in the NWT don't have licensed childcare. This is an essential priority. It also requires infrastructure investment. The biggest barrier to providing more childcare spaces in the NWT is having the appropriate space to host that childcare, and what we learned last time was that the regulations are very stiff in this area. I appreciate the reason for it, but it makes it out of reach for non-profits to build these childcare spaces, and so we need infrastructure investment, and I believe that our best option for that is to build childcare spaces in schools, because that is one place where all children will be, from the time they start childcare until the time that they graduate or move into a higher-level school. So the infrastructure investment in childcare is a must.

The next area I heard a lot about again this time, as I did last time, was the cost of living. Power bills are very high in Yellowknife. Yellowknife subsidizes electricity rates for the rest of the NWT, and people find them onerous. They end up being one of the largest household bills that they have. We need to come to terms with the cost of our power, whether that's investing in clean energy, subsidizing power rates, finding more customers. We have to come to terms with not only the price of it, but the fact that the infrastructure for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation is aging and will need a major investment of replacement in the near future. Some of this burden could be taken on by the development of Taltson, but I don't see that happening soon. That's a very long-term project, with distinct risks of its own.

The third area that's very important to me is services for seniors. In the last Assembly, not one new unit of senior's housing was built in Yellowknife. That's in spite of the fact that 134 seniors' households are added to our population every single year. So what we end up with is a six-year waiting list at Avens, and more than a quarter of the public housing waiting list, which is an astonishing 330 households, more than a quarter of that list is seniors. We also have seniors in emergency shelters. We need housing for seniors. We also need a bigger budget for retrofitting housing for seniors so that they can stay in their own homes, if they are able to do so. Right now, the budget for the entire NWT is barely adequate for a small community, let alone for 33 communities.

We also need to invest in homecare for seniors. The longer they can stay in their own homes, usually the happier they are, and the less money they cost the public purse. So I am anxiously

awaiting the results of the homecare study that was commissioned in the last Assembly and should be delivered soon.

A third area for seniors is the day program. There was a day program until three years ago. It was closed because the service provider, Avens, decided that it was too risky a program, given the diversity of needs of the people within it, but there has never been a replacement for this program. The result of that is that social inclusion needs of elders are not being met, and at the same time respite needs of families who are caring for these elders are not being met, either. So this is an absolute essential. We need a day program in Yellowknife.

I want to talk a little bit also about children. I've talked about the importance of early childhood development, and I had this in my speech last time, as well. The very best investment we can make is in children ages zero to three. If they get a good start at that age, they will be set up to succeed at school, from the time they begin through until the end. When we don't make that investment, we short-change those children, and we pay for it, and they pay for it for the rest of their lives. It's just not fair. We must do better.

The other area under the heading of children is improvements of services for children in care. We all heard Auditor General had to say about services provided. They are inadequate at the very least and in some cases harmful, so there is a quality improvement plan in place, but we have to make sure that the social work positions are adequately staffed throughout the Northwest Territories so that services to children in care are improved.

One of the other areas under the heading of children is food security. Most of the NWT residents who experienced moderate or severe food insecurity are children, and they depend on feeding programs at school. They depend on their parents going to food banks. It is not acceptable. There needs to be a comprehensive food security strategy in the next Assembly that deals with the question of how to keep people from experiencing hunger or making trade-offs about the quality and quantity of food that they are consuming. This is absolutely essential. We have 20 percent of our territorial population who are experiencing food insecurity.

The next area is income assistance reform. There have been some changes to income assistance, which are useful, but it is still a payroll program. It is still a very punitive program, where people are trapped in their monthly allotment, being asked to provide information about what they earned and what they spent. What we need is to pile up the basic income guarantee where we pick a number of different communities of different sizes and in

different locations and give people a monthly amount of money to live on and see whether they are able to make that work to get themselves and their families out of poverty, rather than having them on the payroll system.

The next area is education. The system simply is not delivering the results that we want in terms of the quantity and quality of high school graduates. We have money now for Jordan's Principle, but that money is not guaranteed into the future. It needs to be guaranteed, so that children with disabilities have the help they need to succeed.

We also need to revisit the funding for education to ensure that schools that have heavy numbers of children who need extra support in fact have the money to provide that support.

I am a supporter of post-secondary education and of the revamped Aurora College, or the creation of the new polytechnic, whichever way you look at it. This is something that we really must do.

In the area of health, I heard lots from my constituents about problems with the start-up of the hospital. We have some real quality control issues there, to do with a number of different areas. I don't think they are unique to our hospital start-up, but we need to pay attention to them because they are having a negative impact on the people who are in hospital trying to recover from their illnesses and injuries, and they are in a situation where the care is compromised by the physical structure.

The other thing to do with health generally, and the hospital in particular, is that it is a Cadillac facility being run on a shoestring in terms of staffing because of the shortage of nursing and other health professionals. We need a strategy to attract and retain nurses to this territory so that we can do better with healthcare.

The last area I want to talk about is the one that is probably most important to my constituents other than the economy, and that is the situation in downtown Yellowknife. The homeless and intoxicated population in downtown Yellowknife are from all across the territory. They are not just people in Yellowknife on hard times. They are people from all of your communities who have come here for different reasons, and they have stayed here. Maybe your community is dry, and they can drink here. Maybe they were in jail, and they stayed here when they got out. Maybe they were in hospital, and they stayed here when they got out. The situation is that we now have a large population of people who have chronic addictions and chronic homelessness, not always both together but with a variety of both of those problems. They need housing, and they need programming.

There was an evaluation of the combined day shelter and sobering centre. That was completed this year, and it has 11 specific short-term recommendations about how services at the sobering centre and day shelter could be improved. We need to bring the city and the contractor on board to implement those recommendations so that we can improve services to people on the street and we can assist people in feeling safe downtown. That was something I heard very often. People do not feel safe. They are intimidated by the intoxicated population, and it is on us to help those people feel safe downtown whenever they happen to be there.

The depressing thing about my list is it is very much like the list I gave four years ago. That doesn't mean that nothing happened. It means that not enough happened, and once again we are in a changed mandate situation. Eleven new MLAs last time, 12 new MLAs this time. We can't fool around anymore. These chronic issues that we have all mentioned, intoxication, homelessness, poor education results, these are ongoing issues that we really have to drill down on this time and not make an incremental change, but make a really significant change. Thank you.

**DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Next, we will turn to the MLA-elect for Frame Lake, Mr. O'Reilly.

#### MR. KEVIN O'REILLY'S SPEECH

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My apologies for missing this morning as I was over at the judicial recount. I will carefully study the statements made by my colleagues so I have a better sense of your priorities and how we can work together. Congratulations to the new MLAs and returning ones, and I am very happy to be here to work with you.

We have been asked to talk about where we want to see the Northwest Territories in 10 years and what we can do in our four years in this Assembly, but I would like to start with some thoughts about the Frame Lake riding, what I heard at the door during the campaign, and I would also like to acknowledge the work of the volunteers on my campaign.

The Frame Lake riding is a diverse area within Yellowknife. It stretches from this Legislative Assembly over to Woolgar Avenue. It includes commercial properties along Old Airport Road; Northlands Trailer park, which is undergoing some tremendous revitalization; public housing in Sissons and Lanky Courts; and single-family dwellings along Forrest Drive, Bromley Drive and Court, and Kuntsen Court and Avenue. It is a vibrant part of

Yellowknife, with many Indigenous and immigrant families. It is my home, and I love it.

I would like to thank the residents in Frame Lake for coming out to vote in 2019. Voter turnout went from 28 percent in 2015 to 45 percent in this year. That is a tremendous increase. I also want to acknowledge the work of Elections NWT, as the voter list was in much better shape this time around, and I also want to thank them for their promotion of the increased voting opportunities. Frame Lake was a much-anticipated race, and I wish to thank my competitor David Ramsay, who ran a strong campaign and presented a credible alternative. I wish him nothing but the best with his future endeavours. I recognize that not everyone voted for me and that even more residents were not able to or were not inclined to vote. I will still work very hard to represent their interests and respond to any concerns brought to my attention.

As to what I heard at the door, it varied a lot depending on where I was in Frame Lake. In the lower-income areas, the main concerns involved public housing, income support, childcare, and education. In the higher-income areas, the main issues tended to be around cost of living, especially power bills, climate change, the economy, and a variety of other issues. I really appreciated the opportunity to engage residents and will stay in touch by personally delivering one of the three annual newsletters each year.

I would like to thank all those who volunteered on my campaign. Our families loan us to this great institution, and I am no exception. My partner, Suzette Montreuil, I could not have done it without your support. I also need to thank my official agent, Bob Wilson, and the many other volunteers who helped out. I also would like to thank those who have sent me messages and congratulations. Your support is very much appreciated.

So where could and should the NWT be 10 years from now? Here is a dream that I have, and I hope that we can all share parts of it and agree upon it. We would have a diversified economy, where our peoples are more fully employed and engaged in a variety of activities that include mining, tourism, arts and culture, research and development, agriculture, and the fisheries. We would produce a lot more of what we consume. The workforce would more closely reflect the cultural and other diversity of the NWT, with Indigenous peoples taking their rightful place in senior management. We would have vibrant small communities, regional centres, capital that serves all of our residents. Indigenous languages would continue to be spoken in each of the regions and taught in all our schools, with improved access to all government services in our official languages. There would also be a strong French first-language education system that would

control its own admissions. [English translation not provided.]

All of our citizens would have access to affordable, suitable, and adequate housing. Seniors, or knowledge holders, will be able to age in place, have access to appropriate services. All of our communities would be self-sufficient in terms of their energy needs. We would minimize and potentially eliminate fossil fuels through green, renewable energy such as solar, wind, and small hydro, with efficient storage systems. No more big grids, no more big energy projects. Communities would own and manage their own energy systems with appropriate support and training, incentives for self-sufficiency, and there would be a solid plan for dealing with the climate crisis mitigation and adaptation.

Caribou herds would once again be thriving through a variety of habitat protection actions, predator control, harvest management, and human disturbance thresholds. There would be a fully funded and functioning integrated environmental and resource management system based squarely on co-management and continual improvement through audits and state of the environment reporting. Legally binding water agreements would all be in place to protect us from upstream threats and would be supported through appropriate community-based monitoring and traditional knowledge.

In terms of governance, there would be a new confederation of regional Indigenous governments and a territorial public government with strong community governments, all recognized with roles and responsibilities set out in a constitution for the NWT. We would have no one living in poverty. There would be adequate, suitable, and affordable housing for all. No more family violence. Mental health supports in place to help build healthy families and communities.

What concrete steps should we take in the next four years to achieve this vision, this dream? What should our priorities start to look like over the next four years to take us along this path?

I'll start with the economy. I said during the campaign that I don't know what else we can do to attract more investment in resource extraction, as this is mostly dictated by commodity prices and financial markets. What we can control is the completion of the remaining land rights agreements, and this needs to be a high priority. We need a more flexible approach and new mandates to allow the regions to evolve as they see fit. I look forward to a new approach to negotiations from GNWT and stronger involvement by the Regular MLAs. We also need to fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples and make sure our policies and legislation is consistent with our obligations under the declaration. We need to continue to co-drafting process with post-devolution legislation and regulations.

We can and should also better promote ourselves as great place to live, work, and do business with greater certainty than many other places. Our resource management systems are different by design, but there is a lot of guidance and assistance available. We also need to make sure that we get a fair return for resources extracted by reviewing royalties and taxation, the scale and pace of development, and benefit retention. We need a new arrangement with the federal government to ensure that we retain more of our own source revenues. A review of our Heritage Fund is also required during the term of the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly. We need to stabilize our fiscal regime to the greatest extent possible. We need to invest more into our people, not just big infrastructure projects. We need evidence-based decisions.

Housing, education, universal childcare, guaranteed basic income, energy self-sufficiency, and food security are the long-term investments that are needed to build sustainability and healthy communities. These should be the priorities when our government goes to Ottawa and the federal government for support and investments. This was certainly not the case with the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly Cabinet, which cut programs and services to fund big infrastructure.

I believe we need to focus on systemic changes that will reduce our cost of living by building more self-sufficient communities. We need to refocus the NWT Power Corporation towards community energy self-sufficiency, rather than relying on big projects and big grids. Renewable energy investment will help lower the cost of living for remote communities and all energy consumers. We need a better-coordinated approach to the climate crises that includes carbon pricing. We need to set a lead department, and give them the authority to work with others inside and outside government. GNWT spending should consider impacts on greenhouse gas emissions, and there should be strong public reporting.

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. We also need to work together on Nutrition North to focus on food security that includes country foods and inter-settlement trade.

We need to increase our investment in our education system and return to the Education Renewal Initiative as the way to further improve

outcomes. We also need to build a strong network across the NWT for post-secondary education that includes the community learning centres, campuses in Inuvik, Fort Smith, and Yellowknife. There is huge potential to attract and focus research and development on our needs and build a knowledge economy.

Children and housing need to form the foundation of our new priorities. 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 a universal childcare system, for which we already have a feasibility plan. We need to keep on top of the necessary improvements to Child and Family Services, and I believe that includes a child and youth advocate.

I am not convinced that a northern-based treatment centre is our best solution to addictions. Aftercare and on-the-land programming such as the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation's healing camp here in Yellowknife are a good start, but we need similar efforts in each of our regions and also available at the community level. I look forward to continued efforts on our downtown area and believe that a managed alcohol program is part of the path moving forward.

Without housing, our residents cannot properly participate in their communities or in the economy. The Housing First approach has shown some success in Yellowknife and elsewhere, and we need more options for seniors and young families.

I look forward to working with all the other MLAs and Cabinet on this important suite of priorities under the themes of economic diversification, investing in healthy communities and children and families, and addressing the climate crisis.

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, and I certainly am happy to be part of that process. Are there ways to improve collaboration and consensus government? Absolutely. As happens every Assembly, lots of ideas and recommendations were put forward by the Special Committee on Transition Matters. I was a member of that committee for the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Some of our recommendations included:

- Better orientation and ongoing training of MLAs;
- Setting clearer and fewer priorities;

- Options for the structure and selection of Cabinet and standing committees;
- Improved and more collaborative budgeting;
- A mid-term review with a focus on priorities and the mandate; and
- Improvements to how legislation is developed, introduced, and reviewed, including future regulations.

At the end of the day, we cannot possibly do everything that has been raised today. We will have to make choices. We all come to this government with different backgrounds, education, and experience. We are not going to agree on everything, but that is also a healthy reality. We should take advantage of the diversity here to help make better decisions and build a stronger Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

**DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Now, for the final word, I will turn to the MLA-elect for Yellowknife South, Ms. Wawzonek.

#### MS. CAROLINE WAWZONEK'S SPEECH

**MS. WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Rutland. Good afternoon, colleagues, and congratulations to you all once again on my behalf. I also want to extend my gratitude to you. I was very nervous last week, but you have all been very welcoming and it's been a really positive start.

Thank you, also, for hanging on. I am the last speaker; whether that's good fortune or bad luck, I'm not sure. The good news is we've all said a lot of similar things, so there is a lot of overlap to get started from. The bad news is that it will be sounding a bit repetitive by the time I'm done.

I also want to say thank you in this first opportunity to speak here to Yellowknife South for placing your trust in me. I began to carry that trust the morning after the election, and I can say that I promise that, every day, I'm going to make my best effort to use my best judgment, to use my best efforts to advance the work of the Assembly on behalf of Yellowknife South.

The priorities I want to talk about today took root over many months of consultation, grew and focused in the course of the campaign. It's my honour to present this vision and these priorities on behalf of Yellowknife South.

My vision is that the Northwest Territories is going to be a leader in Canada. I believe we can show leadership in reconciliation with Indigenous people, and that we can be a leader in establishing modern relationships with Indigenous governments.

I believe the Northwest Territories should be a sought-after place for investment. It's going to be built on a foundation of balance and sustainability.

I believe that the small population that we have, focused and concentrated in small regional communities, should be an opportunity. It should be an opportunity to provide individualized programs and services, focused on the needs of those communities, drawn and delivered by those communities. As such, I think the Northwest Territories can be a leader in a government that is driven by positive outcomes for its people.

After the campaign period, I am more convinced than ever that this vision is achievable because of all the people who I have met throughout the process of the campaign, the ideas that they have shared, their talents, and their dedication. Our people truly are our strength.

My priorities are focused under four themes; health, education, economy, and governance. I will start with health. In many ways, to me, that's the foundation. I have three priorities. The first is that we identify and show quantitative improvement in the social determinants of health. That means things like safe housing, food security, family well-being, and both physical and mental health.

I think we need to start seeing people as whole persons. We need to understand that the ability and the opportunity to learn requires that foundation of health, that our prosperity is going to be impacted by the web of things that impact who we are as people, form our families and our communities to our society around us.

This was a major issue in the constituency for me, because a lot of people spoke about the downtown social issues. We are not going to get ahead facing some of the social issues that we see on our streets downtown, that are playing out across the Northwest Territories, unless we have a long-term vision that truly looks at people as whole people, something that truly starts from the very earliest stages of maternal health and early childhood.

Some of the key social determinants that I'd like to highlight now. I'll start with housing. There is a shortage of housing across the continuum of housing needs; emergency housing, transitional housing, early entry housing, first-stage housing for people looking to get into the market, rental housing, and seniors' housing.

I think we need to be leveraging our partnerships with other governments, the federal government in particular, but also the private sector who are looking for opportunities, as well as with non-profits who have creative ideas and on-the-ground know-how.

I also suggest that we should be creating opportunities for collaboration between departments on this issue, because sometimes the input that is actually going to affect housing might require an input from a different department. For example, for seniors to be aging in place, often what they need is support from mental health or healthcare to provide them with part-time care in their homes.

Food security. In terms of food security, I would suggest we look at the entirety of the production and supply of food in the Northwest Territories and find a way to have a meaningful impact on local food chain supplies. There are agriculture initiatives, and there is also access to traditional food. The sustainable livelihood action plan is one that we should be looking at, to ensure that it is accurately and effectively implemented and actioned. As well, transportation. How can we innovate the transportation of food across the Northwest Territories, so that there is more reliable supply to small communities?

Healthy families. In this respect, I would focus on universal childcare. Universal childcare, to me, should be the end goal, but it doesn't mean that it's an all-or-nothing end game. We've already heard today, I believe from more than one person, why this is such an important and excellent return on investment. It's so much potential for children; it helps parents who may want to return to the workforce; it has the potential to lower the cost of living; and it makes the Northwest Territories someplace where people will want to come, that will make us potentially a unique place in all of Canada. I recognize that this was a goal during the last Assembly, but it's time to move it forward, I would suggest.

Junior kindergarten was an important step forward, but when we created that, we didn't necessarily create the option for aftercare, which left a whole other problem for families. As I have said, it's not all-or-nothing. We can prioritize the availability of childcare spaces first, and move forward gradually, perhaps in a way that uses short-term changes to the system but maintaining the end goal of universality.

The next aspect of the whole-person care approach that I am championing, I'm actually separating it out into its own priority, because it's so important. For me, priority number two under my healthcare theme is that we support positive mental health and long-term reductions in addictions, including reducing the severity of addictions. How I would suggest we do that is with post-treatment, long-term aftercare, both for addictions and mental health, one that includes relapse prevention and community-based supports.

Community-level networks are a critical aspect to ensuring that people can reintegrate successfully into their communities. I believe we should consider establishing mobile units of mental health professionals who can go regularly to the communities to shore up those local supports.

I would suggest having mental health-specific system navigators, or patient advocates, or both, so that patients and their families, the people who are already doing the care, can easily access the best services available.

I would like to see us encourage and support the community-level programs that are happening within non-profits. The Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation, for instance; the FOXY/SMASH programs, for example. These non-profits are doing excellent work, and when we work with our non-profits I think we should start considering looking at different ways of funding them, so it's not project-based, but we can actually look at core funding initiatives that will improve their efficiency.

I'm going to add in here restorative justice. It seems odd that I'm sticking that in under health; I suggest that it's not, but if we're going to be truly restorative for people who are in conflict with the law, I think we need to realize that, very often, these are people who are themselves traumatized and who would benefit from a healthcare, whole-person approach to healing.

Similarly for victims of crime. If we're talking about restorative processes, we must be looking at the victims of crimes, as well, and that they, too, are whole people and they, too, are in need of care and programming that is trauma-informed and culturally appropriate.

My third priority under my health theme would be that we prioritize patient-centred prevention as an approach to improve individual wellness. Two ways I would suggest we could do that; one is, again, community-level and culturally safe programming.

I'd like to see us truly empower the front lines of healthcare services, such as is already beginning in the Indigenous health units here in HSSA, as well as, again, with the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation in the non-profit sector. I believe it is time to start championing these approaches and expanding them.

Also the development of wraparound, patient-centred approaches to care. This is a philosophy that already has seeds happening in the healthcare systems right now, but it is important that we ensure that we have invested enough so that healthcare professionals can truly develop those patient relationships. This will also provide a better workplace and more workplace satisfaction for

healthcare professionals, and again hopefully make the Northwest Territories a destination of choice for them.

Education. Here, I have three items. Early childhood; I've already spoken about the importance of that under healthcare, but I would suggest that we should remember that you have to engage the education sector, as well, so that there is an overlap between health and education, so that there is culturally appropriate programming for young children.

From K to 12, similar to one of my colleagues, I would like to support and invest in action, the Education Renewal Initiative. This is a model that addresses many challenges faced across the Northwest Territories:

- Family engagement within schools;
- Recruitment and retention of teachers;
- Impacts of health on students;
- The need to prioritize different paths for completion of education; and
- Infrastructure challenges in many of the schools, particularly in small communities.

It focuses on the importance of ensuring that every student's capabilities and capacities are being encouraged and supported to the best of that student's ability.

This framework, however, cannot succeed on the backs of the teachers or the schools themselves alone. We must find a way to ensure that there is proper collaboration and cooperation between the health system and education, as well as infrastructure, housing, different departments to provide all the different possible services that are going to be required to truly make this initiative a success.

Finally, adult learning. I also support a Northwest Territories-based Polytechnic University. It's one that I hope is based on diverse partnerships between the communities, between different governments, with industry, other existing educational institutions such as the College nordique or the Dechinta University. I think this should be a shared priority between all. It should be a shared opportunity. In Yellowknife, having a new campus is a priority, but other communities will have other priorities, and they should, again, be all part of moving this initiative forward.

I hope that we would be including high-demand professions, nursing, social work, education, and skilled trades, but this is also an opportunity to be visionary. We can look at areas of our particular

and unique strengths; rare earth, minerals, permafrost, land-based programs, and some other highlights that many of you have already mentioned today. Again, this is an opportunity to make the Northwest Territories a destination of choice.

The Economy. This is certainly something I think many of us have heard about, and I heard about at many of the doors that I was at: what will we do when the diamond mines close, and what will we do to reinvigorate our economy?

I have four priority items here. First, that we settle all land and self-government claims and ensure that existing agreements are fully implemented. I believe we need to provide land ownership certainty; we should accelerate land-use planning, and I believe in acknowledging nation-to-nation relationships. I would like to see us encourage power sharing and partnership.

The second priority is to reinvigorate the mineral resources sector. Here, there are two things I'd like to mention. One is the infrastructure gaps in transport, land, air, water; energy; communications. I'm not going to pick, because that's not my job necessarily. If I could choose, I would have them all. I hope that we can leverage partnerships, leverage funds, but maintain a goal of completing these projects and not only studying their feasibility.

The second part for me, under the mineral resource sector, is to look back, actually, to the 2014 mineral development strategy. The goals of that strategy are as alive today as they were back then:

- Create a competitive edge to improve investor confidence;
- Improve the regulatory environment;
- Enhance Indigenous engagement and community capacity;
- Promote a lasting legacy; and
- Enrich the workforce.

Those five goals are still five things that I think would not only improve the mineral resource sector, but in fact many of our economic sectors, as well. In my view, it's time to, in fact, improve the implementation of that strategy.

I will highlight just a few. Firstly, with respect to regulations and the regulatory environment, I would like to see regulations that are responsive. We have that opportunity now, because it's time to start developing the regulations for the Mineral Resources Act.

Ensure that deadlines are timely and enforceable, and as far as promoting a lasting legacy, industry is

looking to have social license. Companies and corporations want to be good neighbours and investors are increasingly expecting corporations to in fact be accountable for their carbon footprints, among other social issues. I think, if we can create the conditions that allow industry to achieve those goals, again, we will be making the Northwest Territories a destination for investment.

My third priority under the economy is to support the growth, both in the number as well as in the size, of our northern-owned and operated businesses. Let's make sure they have the opportunity and the ability to scale themselves up, when appropriate. We can do this by reducing the cost of doing business, which will hopefully also lower the cost of living, because this is done through infrastructure, again. In this regard, I would highlight energy and electricity costs, and reducing the reliance on diesel, which has to be trucked up and is expensive across the Northwest Territories.

I come back again to regulatory systems. In this regard, again, responsive and modern. Considering a two-for-one rule, perhaps, where we don't layer on new regulations. Every time you have a new regulation, you must at least take one, if not another one, off.

Interdepartmental cooperation, as well. Sometimes the regulations in one area are impacting the ability to have growth in another. For example, operating a business in public housing. This, to me, seems like exactly the place where we would want to encourage small-sized businesses.

Land access. I am in support of having a plan to begin transferring lands that are already within a municipal boundary, in active consultation with Indigenous governments.

A task force to ensure that there is better procurement and contracting, so that we are keeping wage dollars in the North. There are many ways to do this, and I believe a task force could come back with options for a very quick turnaround to provide solutions.

Priority four, last one in this category: to build the foundations for a knowledge economy. The Northwest Territories is still a frontier, but I think we can harness that. A knowledge economy is more than just a Polytechnic University; it's an approach. It's an approach to an economy that is innovative, entrepreneurial, creative, where we can actually use the "get 'er done" spirit of the North and actually say that that's how we want to build the economy going forward, in terms of all of our diversification strategies.

We can support innovation with research and development funding that is scaled to the size of

the businesses we have in the North, and encourage collaborative hubs. There is already an artist space up in Inuvik. I think there can be manufacturing start-up spaces elsewhere in the Northwest Territories.

I know it's the end of the day, but I'm almost done.

---Laughter

My last theme is governance, and there are two priorities here. The first is to create opportunities for communication and cooperation laterally and up and down through departments. What I mean by this: in terms of our front-line service providers, they are often the ones that know exactly the best thing to do to make a tiny change that will improve their work life, as well as the services that they are giving to people in the communities.

I think there should be regular meetings between people who are providing social programs, for example, both inside government as well as in the non-profit sector. There could similarly be, as I've already talked about, regular meetings between education and health; between justice, health, and housing; all of these different groups that are trying to solve the same problems should be having regular meetings to make sure that they are not at cross purposes, but that they are actually providing the best services together.

At a senior level, I would suggest there should be budget efficiencies, so that budgets are not overlapping; people aren't afraid of their budgets being amalgamated or clawed back, but that they can in fact work together to ensure that there is enough money to do the things that these departments all want to be achieving.

I think we can lead by example, and it's heartening that many of us have already spoken about this. We, as 19, can demonstrate the value of good communication, of collaboration, and of working together. It is a historic Assembly, but it will be even more so, depending on what happens in the next four years.

My second and last priority is to create a culture and expectation for active implementation and evaluation of all government programs and services. Our solutions should never be a process. Solutions should be measurable results that impact on people. As we set our goals and our expectations, there should be incremental performance indicators. Every step of the way, you need to be able to measure what you're doing. As you measure them, there should be a clear point of accountability, somebody responsible for the thing that they're supposed to be getting done, and someone with sufficient authority that, if it's not



happening, that person has the ability and the power to make change.

I believe the Northwest Territories can be a leader, and we can be a leader in governance that is not divided by partisanship, but in fact is united behind a collective vision. It's a vision that I believe will succeed if we value action, value accountability, and I look forward to working with all of you, working together towards a collective vision. Thank you.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Just before I bring the roundtable to a close, a few remarks. To those Members-elect who are new to the Chamber, I have to say it was a very impressive debut. Congratulations on delivering your first speeches, and for many of you on your first day here.

Thank you to all Members-elect for your participation today and your words and wisdom as you begin this priority-setting process. There are some clear themes that are emerging, but there are also many different views on these priorities. The challenge, or more importantly the opportunity, that is before you is to communicate and collaborate over the weeks ahead to reach a consensus on the priorities for the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

I would like to remind Members that we will reconvene tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. in the Caucus Room, and I would just ask that Members please join me in wishing the MLA-elect for Monfwi a happy significant-milestone birthday.

---Applause

The Members' round table is adjourned. Thank you.

---ADJOURNMENT