



***“Address to the People of the Northwest Territories”***

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Premier**

**Government of the Northwest Territories  
Northwest Territories**

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**Check Against Delivery**

## **Speaking to the Sunrise Rotary Club - Hay River, NWT**

Elders, youth, guests, leaders and people of the North.

It is the beginning of a New Year and also the mid-point of my term as your Premier. It is an honour to be here today to address you.

I want to take a moment to thank those of you who took the time to give me your statements of support this past October and the support that you gave to the economic and social and political direction in which your government, your territory and all people are heading.

Personally, I want to thank the Native Women's Association who gave me comfort, the chiefs, the Inuvialuit and Metis leaders who came to my defence, and the business and community leaders who came out publicly to declare their support for my leadership in the vision that we all share together.

I would like to highlight for you some of the key achievements that this government, this legislature, this cabinet, with your support, has achieved to date.

More than anything, we should recognize that in Canada and in North America we are enjoying an economy that is performing very well, driving primarily by natural gas exploration, diamond mine construction and the operation, as well as related resource sector activity. Our economy has momentum. In fact, compare to other jurisdictions, in Canada, we are number one.

To support this momentum, we are encouraging new partnerships with southern businesses. We are building capacity in our labour market and territorial business community. We are working to maximize northern employment, particularly for our young people, our youth. And we will continue to work to improve infrastructure, to serve our residents and the needs of industry.

The decisions that some of us made 25 years ago to begin taking control of our future, I believe are starting to produce results today.

It is recognized that the U.S. President Bush and our Prime Minister Chretien have had discussions about the Northwest Territories: the resources we have here and the will of the people to be part of a global economy.

Multi-national corporations are now discussing the future of the Northwest Territories with us, and the development of the resources. We have taken a lead

in articulating the dreams and the visions of our people, and to carve out a place for ourselves not just in Canada, but in the global community. That is how we must continue to see ourselves if we are going to ensure ourselves a future.

It is historic to see that one day discussions and decisions made by any one of our Aboriginal land corporations here in the North would be discussed the following day in a boardroom in Houston or Calgary. Historically, in an unprecedented way, Aboriginal leaders declared at the beginning of 2000 that our people must have equity in any future pipeline down the Mackenzie Valley.

We developed a non-renewable resource strategy to help create a positive climate for investment and development in the North for ourselves and Canada and, again, on a global basis.

On Monday of this week the gas producers and Aboriginal pipeline corporations responded to this positive climate with a notice of intent to apply for a pipeline permit to see the construction of a pipeline to bring Canadian gas, northern gas to markets.

Even the federal government, which we have often criticized for inaction, has responded in part with funding for ice road construction, but more notably, Finance Minister Paul Martin found the political will to agree to a \$60 million adjustment to offset our costs incurred during division of the Northwest Territories.

It is apparent that we have created a new confidence amongst ourselves here in the Northwest Territories and in Canada. I believe Monday's announcement will only help convince our Prime Minister, Finance Minister Paul Martin, and indeed the northern Minister Bob Nault that we must work together to ensure that federal investment flows through the North so that we can get the support we need to maintain the course we have set for ourselves, and to continue to work to realize our full potential.

I want to address the importance of recognizing and using the full potential of all our peoples here in the territory:

The Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in, the Sahtu, the Deh Cho, the Akaitcho, the Dogrib, the Metis; those of you who have had the courage and the vision to come North years ago to make this your home; and those of you who have come recently with the intent, the strength and the vision to see this as a place to make your home.

Each and every one of us is challenged to help improve the health and well-being of our communities, our families, our women, our elders, our children.

Each day we are challenged with family violence, abuse in all its forms, poverty, inadequate housing, fetal alcohol syndrome, and the legacy of residential schools.

They all continue to assail us, to damage our social fabric. While the task of addressing these many issues is complex, I believe that together we can make a difference. But it will take the commitment of this government, in partnership with you the people to make positive change.

In keeping with that, in June of last year, our government hosted a major gathering of non-governmental organizations, community groups, Aboriginal governments and the federal government to develop a made-in-the-north social agenda.

We took this step because our social fabric is essential and must be balanced with resource development, employment and business initiatives. The task of completing a social agenda is in the hands of the Social Agenda Working Group, which will be reporting to us, to all of us in the near future.

Partnerships are fundamental to realizing our vision, and nowhere is this more apparent than our commitment to recognize and support Aboriginal governments. To date, relationships with Aboriginal governments have been improved by significant agreements such as the South Slave Metis Political Accord.

Progress has been made in regional land claim and self-government negotiations involving the Beaufort-Delta, the Dogrib Nation, and the Salt River First Nations. An agreement has been reached on a tri-partite action plan for both economic development and capacity building. We are especially pleased and proud with the progress made by an Intergovernmental Forum during this past year. This is a truly unique way of bringing together all levels of government to deal with territorial-wide issues.

Later today I will join Minister Jim Antoine, Aboriginal leaders and DIAJND Minister Bob Nault in Fort Simpson to discuss arrangements for future negotiations on resource revenue sharing and devolution.

As you know, the lands and the waters that we call ours continue to be owned and managed by the federal government in Ottawa. It is time for this to end. As I speak to you today, revenues from diamond mines operating in our backyard continue to see dollars flowing to Ottawa. This too must change.

All of us understand and respect the need to protect our lands, our resources and our environment. Our ancestors have done that. Our future generations demand that. Let me state categorically, this government is committed to ensuring that the land is protected for all our future generations, and for the duration of our term we will continue to work and to organize ourselves in ways that better reflect the important balance between environmental management and resource development.

We have also established an Energy Secretariat to produce a comprehensive strategy to include environmentally friendly energy sources. We will complete and implement this initiative by the end of our term.

We need to recognize that territorial and regional boards and agencies established under land claim agreements are now very much a part of the environmental review and decision-making process on land use and development matters.

In the next two years, in co-operation with our Aboriginal partners and the federal government, we will work to improve and streamline our regulatory process.

Our work has already led to a dramatic increase in confidence by industry evidenced this week by this week's announcement.

We will continue to work:

- to expand community and regional capacity to manage and monitor the environment;
- to expand monitoring capabilities for air quality wildlife and forest inventory;
- to support local, regional, national and international actions to reduce emissions from pollutants including greenhouse gases; and
- to promote a reduction of energy consumption here in the North in our own homes, and in our communities.

Our ancestors were strong people. Their strength came from their belief in themselves - an unwavering belief in the gifts, resources and qualities given by the Creator. We that follow them must continue that tradition and face up to the challenge of every day by believing in ourselves.

This demands dedication to one another, to our diverse cultures and languages, our individual identities, and a commitment to see the development of a unique identity that will encompass all of us as a people of the new territory.

These are our greatest strengths and our most precious resource: our Aboriginal diversity of Inuvialuit, Metis, Gwich'in, Sahtu, Deh Cho, Dogrib and Akaitcho Dene. Together, with the diversity brought to our land by people who came North generations ago and those who have come recently make us truly unique.

We must find ways, each and every day to support and celebrate this diversity, to meet the challenges it presents so that we can together go into the future to meet the challenges that are confronting us.

Governments, both public and Aboriginal, must and will, continue to have a role in maintaining and reviving our languages, promoting and enhancing our cultures, and finding ways to encourage the development of a unique culture for all our peoples within the territory.

Last year we passed legislation to recognize our Aboriginal heritage, by declaring an annual holiday on June 21<sup>st</sup>. We are the first in Canada to make National Aboriginal Day a true holiday, a day to celebrate and to recognize our Aboriginal peoples.

We also continue to work to put our unique northern impression on educational programs and health care delivery, in naming of our buildings, and arts and crafts, eco and cultural tourism, northern sports and our country food.

We should recognize that many of our leaders and our communities have lead the way in seeking an identity by renaming themselves, reclaiming ownership of what is theirs.

Today we know Fort Norman as Tulita, Lutsel K'e was Snowdrift, Arctic Red River has become Tsiigehtchic, Fort Franklin is now Deline. We have Whati, Gameti, Wekweti.

These people and communities are putting a unique stamp on the map of Canada, a strong statement of culture and identity. We have an obligation to respect that. Our leadership initiatives must be recognized as contributing to the development of an identity for all of us our communities and our people.

A major challenge still facing us is to find a name for our territory, our home. It is a challenge that we must address together, as we seek to assume control of our future, our resources and our land, and to continue the work to develop a unique identity for ourselves.

Recently, Members of the Legislature collectively agreed on the need for a process to help us identify a new name for our territory - a process and a name

that will symbolize for all residents our uniqueness, our unity, our diverse and unique makeup, and more than anything, declare our place in Canada.

MLAs have instructed Cabinet, and Cabinet has given our support to Minister Antoine and MLA Bill Braden of Yellowknife, to take the lead in this initiative and to provide recommendations at the March session of our legislature.

All of us have come a long way as governments and as peoples. Twenty-five years ago, many of us stood up to the oil and gas industry and the federal government of Canada and said there will be no pipeline until it is built to our benefit and on our terms.

Two years ago we shared our dream of having a territory that is self-sufficient, self-reliant. A territory where careful planning and strategic investment in large-scale resource development, could be maximized to improve the lives and the well-being of all our people, all northerners.

Earlier this week the Mackenzie Valley Producer Group and the Mackenzie Valley Aboriginal Corporation told us they are ready to proceed with the regulatory application for a gas pipeline. The Aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories have positioned themselves to seek one-third ownership of this pipeline, of this project.

We have come this far because we have a spirit, an entrepreneurial spirit that exists within each of us, each of our families, each of our peoples: the Gwich'in, the Sahtu, the Deh Cho, the Dogrib, the Akaitcho, the Metis families, the Metis Nation, and those of you who have come generations ago to make this your home.

The spirit that brought you here, the spirit that has served you to survive and endure and development and establish families here is what we need to recognize, to celebrate and make use of.

It is this spirit that has given us the confidence and the power to rise above the obstacles that we face, to continue to be innovative and creative in the face of adversity, and to be courageous through the hard times that we have faced, face today and will face tomorrow.

It is this spirit that tells me that we will continue to stand resolute as we meet the challenges of tomorrow. It is this enduring spirit, this northern spirit that gives me the pride and the confidence to stand here today and say that I know and I believe with absolute confidence that we are able and we will complete the tasks that we've set out for ourselves in our vision.

Thank you very much.