

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE: THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES' AGENDA FOR CHANGE





BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE: THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES' AGENDA FOR CHANGE

N.W.T.
LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY
MAY - 2 1996
Yellowknife, N.W.T.



*An agenda
for change*



123
MAY 15 - YAN
17

May 1996

The Northwest Territories is our home.

Our land is rich in resources and our people are strong. We are determined to make our own decisions, set our own priorities, and manage the programs and services that affect us the most.

Our people want a government that is committed to the creation of two new territories. They want a government which respects aboriginal rights and interests. They want a government which recognizes traditional knowledge and the traditional use and occupancy of lands by aboriginal people. They want a government that faces up to the reality of balancing its budget and dealing with its accumulated deficit. They want a government that has the same priorities that they do – a government that listens and learns – that will help build a solid foundation for the future.

Those were the messages that the twenty-four members of the 13th Legislative Assembly received from the people who voted us into office in October of 1995.

Since then, the members of the Assembly have been working together towards managing change, creating opportunities, and empowering communities so that our communities will have the tools necessary to set their own priorities and to manage their own affairs.

We have also considered how best to achieve self-sufficiency and self determination, to secure northern control over northern resources, and take our rightful place within a united Canada, a Canada that understands and recognizes the important role of our people, our land and our future.

This is what the 13th Assembly's Agenda for Change is all about. It's about Building a Foundation for the Future – a future where our children and grandchildren will have a better opportunity to realize their hopes and aspirations.

Our people want a government that is committed to the creation of two new territories, which respects aboriginal rights and interests, which recognizes traditional knowledge, that faces up to the reality of balancing its budget, that has the same priorities that they do – a government that listens and learns – that will help build a solid foundation for the future.



*An agenda
for change*



Building a Foundation for the Future

No government in the history of the Northwest Territories has ever taken office faced with the number and degree of financial, administrative, economic, social, and constitutional challenges facing the 13th Assembly.

We have spent the last few months discussing how we can reduce expenditures to avoid the projected deficit – so that northern residents will be better equipped for a new tomorrow and so that those who cannot look out for themselves will be protected.

It has become clear that the Northwest Territories needs a change of direction. It is also clear that difficult financial decisions have to be made and that we, too, are in the same situation as federal and provincial governments – there is not enough money to continue as we have in the past.

This means many of the old and expensive ways of doing things must be changed.

Out of that change the government wants to create new opportunities for the citizens of the Northwest Territories so that they can take control over the future.

To make sure that this happens, the Members of the 13th Assembly have prepared the Agenda for Change. It sets forth our vision and our priorities. It will govern what we do and how we do it through our term of office.

Implementing the Agenda for Change will help us to make sure our children and their children have the lives we want for them and that they want for themselves.

The Agenda for Change is about changing the way we do business. It is about setting clear priorities and objectives and focusing on getting things done.

It is about making a public commitment to do what we consider most important to secure the social, economic and constitutional future of the Northwest Territories.



Our Vision for the Future

The 13th Assembly's vision is for a Northwest Territories with a secure financial future that will be more established as a politically and economically viable unit of Canada; and that a healthier, better educated and more self-reliant citizenry is able to enjoy a good quality of life and have access to more of the jobs they want and need.

To do this, first and foremost, we must have a secure financial future. This means that we must address our deficit/debt situation right now or we will not be able to plan for and implement solutions and strategies to meet our other pressing challenges. We must balance the budget as soon as we can and we must come to terms with our accumulated deficit before the end of our term. Our goal is to balance our budget by the end of our second year.

Our vision and our priorities must be implemented within the reality of our fiscal situation. By setting out a clear direction, and sticking to it, we will be able to accomplish this. By setting our priorities now, and working hard towards meeting them, we will build a stronger Northwest Territories and secure a prosperous future for our children and grandchildren.

To make our vision a reality, the 13th Assembly has established these priorities:

1. *We will secure our financial future.*
2. *We will improve social conditions.*
3. *We will improve economic conditions.*
4. *We will empower communities.*
5. *We will work towards community wellness.*
6. *We will develop a more effective and efficient government structure.*
7. *We will make Nunavut and the new western territory a reality.*
8. *We will take action on aboriginal issues.*
9. *We will take control of our own future.*
10. *We will be heard at the national level.*

The 13th Assembly's vision is for a Northwest Territories with a secure financial future that will be more established as a politically and economically viable unit of Canada; and that a healthier, better educated and more self-reliant citizenry is able to enjoy a good quality of life and have access to more of the jobs they want and need.



*An agenda
for change*



Securing Our Financial Future

We know that fiscal limitations will affect everything that we do, or want to do, but we must maintain fiscal health to maintain self-reliance.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is facing a major budget shortfall – more than 10% of current expenditures must be cut if the budget is to be balanced and our financial future secured. Balancing the budget by the end of the 1997-98 fiscal year means over \$100 million in cuts must be made now, with more cuts to come.

Financial limitations should not determine what our goals are, they should only affect the time it requires to achieve them, the priority we can assign them, or the specific strategies we employ to achieve them. Nevertheless, the present cuts will be real, and future cuts are inevitable. Planning now will allow us to meet this challenge and still address our other priorities.

Therefore a priority of this government is:
to secure our financial future by balancing the budget and maintaining our fiscal health while continuing to provide essential programs at a cost we can afford.

The Government of the Northwest Territories does have considerable resources. We have an obligation to ensure that those resources are used effectively, efficiently, and equitably to provide programs and services to our 66,000 citizens. We also have a responsibility, when deciding how to get the best use of our resources, to continue to examine all areas of government activity, including subsidies.

Because of our small population base, only one fifth of our budget is collected in the Territories through personal income taxes and other tax revenues and sources of income. The rest of the money comes from the federal government in Ottawa – a government that is cutting its own budget and reducing grants and transfer payments to provinces and territories in order to eliminate its accumulated deficit of \$600 billion.

Our projected deficit means that we must make tough decisions but we also understand that people must have time to adjust to the changes. Time is also required to strengthen and build the new partnerships needed to implement the Agenda for Change.

... to secure our financial future by balancing the budget and maintaining our fiscal health while continuing to provide essential programs at a cost we can afford.



To protect the delivery of essential programs and services for those most in need, we will balance the budget over a two-year period. While many budget changes will be made in 1996/97, others will wait until 1997/98.

Cutting budgets is not a popular exercise, particularly since almost half of all GNWT dollars go to municipalities and to health and education boards which make their own budget decisions. A large part of the remainder is for essential programs and services and for salaries.

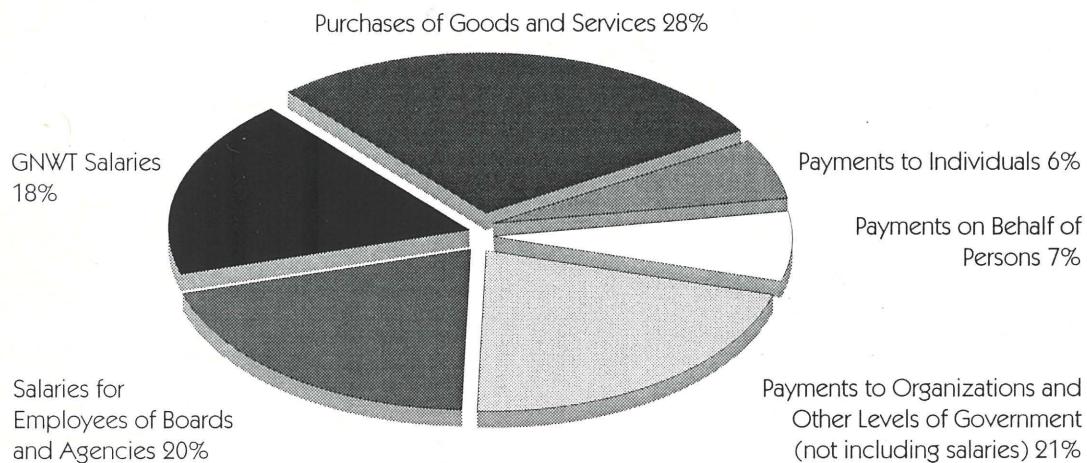
Overall, our spending is divided into three roughly equal parts:

- Over one third of our budget is spent on wages. Of this, 18% is direct spending by the GNWT on our own employees. Another 20% is spent by our partners in boards and agencies.
- Just less than a third (28%) is GNWT spending on goods and services.

- The remaining third is made up of three elements:
 - money we pay directly to people (6%). This is for things like social assistance, student grants, or the fur price program.
 - money we pay to someone else on behalf of people (7%). This is for things like family counselling, foster care, and a variety of medical benefits.
 - money we pay to organizations or to other levels of government (21%) such as municipalities, housing associations, school boards, or non-profit organizations. This money supports the organizations that provide services to our citizens. It also includes payments to the federal government for the RCMP.

Making the changes we need to make in these areas will require the help and cooperation of all of our partners.

Where the Money Goes



Among the strategies that we will use to accomplish our objectives of balancing the budget while protecting essential programs are: implementing a multi-year business planning approach to budget and program planning; creating an environment that attracts investment and business; and seeking changes to our employee compensation package.

We can no longer afford to maintain the same employee benefits package that was originally designed to attract a public service from southern Canada. It is time to recognize the fact that increasing numbers of northern residents have the education and skills to fill northern jobs. As a result, we are implementing a northern benefits package that is affordable and fair, and which still allows our employees to enjoy the benefits of living in the Northwest Territories. We want a made in the North approach to the benefits our employees receive.

We are also speaking with our partners operating health and education boards about funding reductions. They are being asked to do their share by developing plans that will eliminate duplication and save money by entering into new arrangements that will result in reductions and sharing of administrative resources.

The money we have will have to be spent carefully if we are to realize the opportunities that will flow from our budget reform process while continuing to provide client-driven programs and services to those who need them the most.

The Northwest Territories can no longer afford to support expensive procedures and delivery systems, too many government departments, too many committees and too many boards and agencies.

While some of these steps will be hard, the steps need to be taken. There is only so much we can provide with our limited tax system and reduced transfer payments from the federal government.

The Northwest Territories can no longer afford to support expensive procedures and delivery systems, too many government departments, too many committees and too many boards and agencies.



Improving Social Conditions

We know that poor social conditions result in much hardship for the individual. They also make solutions to the Northwest Territories' other challenges harder to achieve.

Northwest Territories residents are less healthy, attain lower levels of education, and are more likely to be on social assistance, to be poorly housed, to be incarcerated, or to have alcohol dependencies, than residents of other territories and provinces. At the same time our population is growing rapidly, as is their demand on social programs. As a result, considerable amounts of money are being spent without necessarily addressing the root causes of these conditions.

Therefore, a priority of this government is:

to improve social conditions by redesigning social programs so they are directed to the root causes of individual and group needs for social assistance, education, health care, justice and housing, and to find a better way to provide high quality programs to those most in need at a cost government can afford.

Our first objectives in this area are: to improve the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities; to address the root causes of family and social dysfunction in NWT communities; and to improve the cost-effectiveness of crisis intervention.

The strategies we will use to accomplish these objectives include: getting an immediate and accurate handle on the social, health and wellness status of our citizens; restructuring programs and services to support those initiatives which hold the greatest potential for improving health; and fast-tracking key strategies targeted to improve health in children, youth and elders.

We are also committed to developing and implementing community based healing and treatment programs and income support reform. Another key element of this strategy is to create incentives and support for individuals to participate in the workforce, rather than have them rely on social assistance.

... to improve social conditions by redesigning social programs so they are directed to the root causes of individual and group needs for social assistance, education, health care, justice and housing, and to find a better way to provide high quality programs to those most in need at a cost government can afford.



*An agenda
for change*



Improving Economic Conditions

We know that the economy of the Northwest Territories is not growing fast enough to provide all the jobs our citizens need. Unemployment is already high – rates based on Canadian statistics are currently at 17% overall – and are forecast to rise to 22% by 1999 if nothing is done.

Underemployment and the lack of jobs to look for in many communities means that the real unemployment rate is much higher.

To overcome this problem it is essential that many more new and sustainable jobs be created. We need to support the viable businesses and industries we already have and we must attract new capital and investment to the Northwest Territories. We must also recognize and support the valuable role that jobs in the traditional economy will play in meeting this challenge.

Therefore, a priority of this government is:
to improve economic conditions by enhancing the creation of new, sustainable jobs, by maximizing the number of residents that fill them, and by creating a climate for business that will ensure that jobs, investment, and capital will be attracted to the Northwest Territories.

The Northwest Territories has a young, capable and willing population which can benefit from any opportunities we can create. To help in this area, we will seek advice from a panel of independent advisors on the economy and employment, and will work to improve the business climate to attract jobs, investment and capital to the Northwest Territories.

Strengthening the capacity of the northern workforce to meet the demands of the job market is an essential part of the Agenda for Change. Northern workers must have the opportunity for wage employment in the land where they live.

There are exciting economic opportunities for the Northwest Territories, particularly in the development of mineral resources, as long as they are developed in a socially and environmentally-sound manner that also respects agreements with aboriginal people. Other opportunities will be community driven – in the tourism industry, in forestry and the fur industry, in the arts and crafts sector, and in producing meat and fish products – in areas in which our communities do well.

Our other key objectives in this area are to reduce the economy's reliance on government and to adopt a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to economic development. We want to assist in developing those sectors of the economy which can provide new, sustainable business and employment opportunities for northerners.

... to improve economic conditions by enhancing the creation of new, sustainable jobs, by maximizing the number of residents that fill them, and by creating a climate for business that will ensure that jobs, investment, and capital will be attracted to the Northwest Territories.



Empowering Communities

We know that communities must have the authority to make decisions and manage their own affairs in areas of prime local interest. They need to solve community level social problems themselves, and achieve representative, more responsive, and accountable government.

Communities need to become more self-reliant.

Therefore, a priority of this government is:
to empower communities so that they can become more self-reliant, responsible and accountable.

The Community Empowerment Initiative is a cornerstone of the Agenda for Change. People want community control. They want decisions made at the community level. They want to manage programs and services and deliver them according to local values and needs. The time has come to act. We need to move ahead and build upon the success we have already achieved in putting more authority into the hands of our communities. We need to put the right tools into the right hands.

The Agenda for Change recognizes this reality. We are committed to respecting the ability of community governments to solve their own problems. As a result, new opportunities in this area will be created by cutting back on government overhead and by putting people at the community level to work in jobs that give them management, administrative and budget controls.

Training and support for new municipal financing options, multi-year block funding, turning over program, administration, and capital dollars to the community, as well as the ownership of infrastructure, buildings, and other government assets, are all part of the Community Empowerment Initiative.

This will give community leaders the tools they need – and the ones they have been asking for – the opportunity to set priorities over programs and services, over property management and for capital projects delivered in their home communities.

... to empower communities so that they can become more self-reliant, responsible and accountable.



*An agenda
for change*



Working Towards Community Wellness

We know that healthy communities enhance the self-reliance of both the community as a whole and its individual members. A healthy community is one in which people participate, cooperate, and are mutually supportive. They are communities where the values and expectations of residents are reinforced, where problems are addressed and solved jointly, and where healthier lifestyles are supported.

Community Wellness is the foundation of a community taking control of the problems it needs to solve and the programs it wishes to deliver. The challenges facing the Northwest Territories as a whole will not be well addressed until communities are healthy and able to tackle these challenges on their own.

Therefore, a priority of this government is: *to work towards healthy communities and community-based problem solving by supporting a Community Wellness Initiative which will allow communities to determine program content and design, and by providing block funding for programs such as education, health services, social assistance, employment and training, and community justice.*

Working together, we must declare war on the serious social problems that are plaguing many individuals, families and communities in the Northwest Territories.

These problems, in one way or another, are contributing to a breakdown in family values and lifestyles and lead to violence in the home and on the streets.

Spousal assault and the abuse of adults or children, whether sexually, physically or mentally, must be stopped. Drunkenness and drug dependency can no longer be tolerated by anyone.

That's why we have made it a priority to work towards healthy communities and community-based problem solving through the Community Wellness Initiative.

We will not only move to expand the jurisdiction of community governments, we will also work cooperatively with them to integrate services designed to help people get at the root causes of their problems.

Instead of three or four government-assisted organizations helping people at the community level, we want to move towards a single, more cost effective, agency that can serve as the centre of Community Wellness Initiatives within each community.

Community Wellness is linked closely to income reform and the Community Empowerment Initiative. Communities will be able to use their block funding to set their priorities for programs such as education, health services, social assistance, employment and training, community justice and crisis intervention.

Taking this approach will allow communities to focus their resources on issues and activities where solutions are needed the most.

... to work towards healthy communities and community-based problem solving by supporting a Community Wellness Initiative which will allow communities to determine program content and design, and by providing block funding for programs such as education, health services, social assistance, employment and training, and community justice.



Developing a More Effective and Efficient Government Structure

We know that government operations need to be streamlined – this means that more efficient and more effective services are delivered to the public at a lower cost. We want this government to get its house in order, to set clear direction, and to stick to its plan. Doing this will provide a better and more secure future for the Northwest Territories.

Our goals must lead toward a sustainable and prosperous future for the Northwest Territories. The strategies we adopt must focus on a better way to get the most value from our budget expenditures – a better way to provide high quality essential programs to those who need them most – and to do so at a cost that we can afford.

Therefore, a priority of this government is: *to develop a more effective and efficient government structure by reducing the administrative overhead and by transferring authority and accountability for actions to program departments and to communities.*

Important common approaches that will be reflected in the changes we will implement are:

- eliminating waste and duplication;
- streamlining processes and getting rid of unnecessary regulations;
- targeting programs and services to those who need them most;
- recovering costs for services so that, except for essentials, people who use services pay for them;
- moving from direct service delivery to facilitating service delivery by other agencies or governments;
- increasing opportunities for private sector delivery;
- shifting from a regulatory role to a policy and facilitation role;
- improving productivity; and
- reducing administration.

All of our plans for reshaping the way government works will contain one consistent theme – the need to explore new approaches and change the way we do business at all levels of government.

The current financial situation presents the 13th Assembly with the opportunity to make major changes – to make the government serve the people of the North in a better and even more unique way than it has in the past.

For example, by establishing a new Standing Committee structure we have already dramatically changed the way the Legislative Assembly conducts its affairs.

... to develop a more effective and efficient government structure by reducing the administrative overhead and by transferring authority and accountability for actions to program departments and to communities.



*An agenda
for change*



We are going to consolidate departments and reduce administrative overhead because northern people want a more effective and efficient form of government with more money and management control going to the communities. The future demands it.

The government will also get out of a number of activities that the private sector can handle better. This will mean more money in the hands of small businesses and a greater opportunity to develop permanent jobs.

Government has to serve the people, not itself. It is not only necessary, it is the right thing to do. Implementing the Agenda for Change will make sure this happens.

We are seeking changes to our employees compensation arrangements because the Northwest Territories can no longer afford to be spending over one-third of its budget, or \$455 million, on wages and benefits for the 7,000 employees it presently supports.

As a result of all these changes, we will create a smaller and more effective government structure – a structure with streamlined programs and less red tape – a structure which will get more money out to communities, where it is needed the most.



Making Nunavut and the New Western Territory a Reality

The Northwest Territories will divide into two new territories on April 1, 1999. We are sincere in our belief and serious in our intent that this will happen.

Therefore, a priority of this government is: *to ensure that the new governments of both Nunavut and the new western Territory will be in place and fully-functional by April 1, 1999, and to ensure that division administration costs do not diminish existing programs or service levels.*

There is an immediate need to finalize many outstanding issues about the creation of the two new territories. For example, the basic structure of the new western government needs to be decided so that institutions can be built and laws changed. We also need to secure agreement on new funding arrangements with the federal government for both new territories so that transition can begin in earnest. Securing these arrangements is essential if we are to ensure that existing programs and service levels are not reduced to support new administrative costs.

This also means the federal government must commit itself to where it stands regarding aboriginal self-government, incremental and transitional costs for creating both of the new territories, and continued support for a results-oriented approach to developing a constitution for the new western Territory.

We need certainty in these areas and we need it now. All the work necessary to have two new governments up and running by April 1, 1999, will and must be done. The political aspirations of the people in both new territories cannot be denied.

... to ensure that the new governments of both Nunavut and the new western Territory will be in place and fully-functional by April 1, 1999, and to ensure that division administration costs do not diminish existing programs or service levels.



*An agenda
for change*



Taking Action on Aboriginal Issues

We know that making progress on aboriginal issues is a central concern for us because of who we are and where we live. We all recognize that completing claims and resolving other aboriginal issues will provide the stability necessary to move ahead on securing the future for all the people who live in the Northwest Territories.

Therefore, a priority of this government is: *to respect Aboriginal Rights, Treaty Rights and Aboriginal concerns and views when planning for and making decisions; and to move forward with a meaningful self-government agenda which is based on both a recognition of the Inherent Right and on an integrated public government/self-government model for the rationalized delivery of services.*

Enhanced aboriginal participation in government planning will be key to accomplishing all of our priorities. Making Nunavut and the new western Territory a reality and taking control of our own future won't be possible without aboriginal participation in the decision-making. This participation is also essential for Community Empowerment and Community Wellness to succeed. We have to find common ground and take action on the issues we identify together.

We have to move ahead, and we have to do it together in a way that recognizes the Inherent Right, and which respects and honours existing treaties and the claims process. Aboriginal organizations must be our partners. Together with aboriginal organizations we have to convince the federal government to do what is right.

We understand the need for aboriginal organizations to play a part in the decisions that are being made. We are determined to strengthen existing partnerships and build new ones.

*... to respect
Aboriginal Rights,
Treaty Rights and
Aboriginal concerns
and views when
planning for and
making decisions; and
to move forward with
a meaningful self-
government agenda
which is based on
both a recognition of
the Inherent Right and
on an integrated
public government/
self-government
model for the
rationalized delivery
of services.*



Taking Control of Our Own Future

We know that taking control of the province-like powers presently administered by the federal government within the Northwest Territories is necessary if we are to control our own future.

Securing responsibility for land, water and resource management, and oil, gas and minerals will allow the Northwest Territories to control the pace and manner in which development occurs. It will give us access to some of the revenues from development that the federal government gets now. Taking responsibility for Attorney-General functions will allow this government to better address some of the root causes of the social problems we face.

Northern control will bring more balanced development and new revenue sources. It will increase the self-reliance of the Northwest Territories and facilitate job creation.

Therefore, a priority of this government is: *to take greater control over the pace and manner of economic and social development within the Northwest Territories; and to enhance the ability of the government to access new areas of revenue generation by negotiating the transfer of provincial-type responsibilities, such as petroleum and mineral resources and Attorney-General functions, that are currently administered by the federal government.*

Reducing our reliance on the federal government is a priority, but we need the tools to do it. The people of the Northwest Territories need to take control of our land and all of its resources.

This is more significant to us than it is to the federal government from a revenue perspective. The legislative authority is also important to us. It would let us manage the gas and oil exploration and mineral development that is currently taking place in a way best suited to our own needs and aspirations.

The land we occupy belongs to the people who live here. It is time for people in the Northwest Territories to control their own future. It is time for the federal government to let go.

... to take greater control over the pace and manner of economic and social development within the Northwest Territories; and to enhance the ability of the government to access new areas of revenue generation, by negotiating the transfer of provincial-type responsibilities ...



*An agenda
for change*



Being Heard at the National Level

We know that national financial and political developments can and will have real impact on the interests of the Northwest Territories. The federal government has significant jurisdiction over affairs such as the management of land, water and non-renewable resources in the Northwest Territories. They also provide direct support for aboriginal persons and organizations within the Northwest Territories, and we have relied on the federal government for up to 85% of our revenues.

Our ability to achieve the goals of greater self-reliance, through less fiscal dependency and the devolution of more province-like powers from Canada, will be influenced by our capacity to effectively represent the interest of the Northwest Territories in the emerging new federalism.

Therefore, a priority of this government is: *to ensure that fiscal and political autonomy of the Northwest Territories is enhanced by consolidating the gains we have made on the national scene over the past few years, and by continuing to assert our interests in national forums.*

To accomplish this we will take a more coordinated and focused approach to our relationships with Canada and the provinces. We will develop new and strengthened relationships with those who can help us fulfill our aspirations.

... to ensure that fiscal and political autonomy of the Northwest Territories is enhanced by consolidating the gains we have made on the national scene over the past few years, and by continuing to assert our interests in national forums.



It's Everyone's Challenge

The twenty-four members you elected to the Legislative Assembly are striving to create conditions where political security and prosperity can flourish – a climate where traditions and values can be respected and where new partnerships can be formed.

Working together with people across the North, we have an opportunity to be different and unique in the way we respond to their needs.

To implement our plans, we must work together to make sure that government works to the benefit of all areas and all the people of the Northwest Territories.

We will be clear, determined, and united with our partners. The economic and social well-being of our communities and the people who live in them are essential to the future of the Northwest Territories and will be the starting point of all decision making.

In the process we will make sure that Aboriginal and treaty rights, land agreements, the inherent right to self-government, and other Aboriginal concerns and views are honoured and respected when we plan and when we make decisions.

Final settlement of land claims and treaty land entitlements, northern control over northern resources and the creation of two new territories will provide both the foundation of and the stimulus for future economic growth as we move into the next century.

Our goal is to develop economically, politically and socially in a way that eliminates uncertainties and encourages northern people to participate fully in achieving self-reliance through Community Empowerment.

With a shared vision and cooperation, we will reshape the way government does business in the North. With confidence and resourcefulness, we will solve our financial difficulties. With determination and creativity, we will find ways to address our economic differences and create opportunities to get people back to work or into the workforce for the first time.

It is time for leadership at all levels. It is time for practical solutions that everyone can understand. Individual interests are important, but they must be advanced in a way that serves a common purpose.

To move in the new directions, we will need the cooperation and participation of all parts of our society, north and south, east and west.

And, finally, we cannot forget our history and we must not abandon our strengths.

We are committed to making these changes. With the help and support of our citizens we are confident that we can meet the challenges we face.

This is the foundation on which we will build our future.



*An agenda
for change*



