

ACTION PLAN FOR A TRANSITION TO A NEW WESTERN TERRITORY





We are pleased to present an Action Plan for Transition to a New Western Territory. This document has been developed in consultation with the Members of the Western Caucus.

The action plan outlines the critical steps necessary to successfully launch the new Western territory. It is not intended as a comprehensive blueprint but as a guide to the key actions which need to be taken to ensure the establishment of a strong and stable Western territory. These are actions for which the public can hold this government accountable.

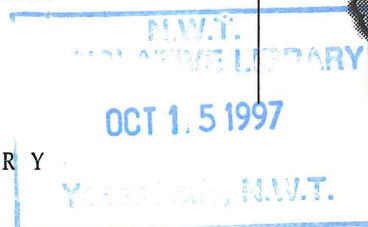
As the action plan is implemented, we are committed to continuing to provide information on a timely basis to ensure that all stakeholders have the necessary information to make sound and timely decisions.

Westerners face division from a strong starting position. The West is rich in natural resources and there is great potential for jobs for current and future generations. We have a government which has developed a unique northern character over several decades. We now have the opportunity to develop it further to better suit the residents of the new Western territory as we move into the next millennium.

Please feel free to contact us or any Member of the Western Caucus regarding Western transition planning. Contact numbers can be found on page 26.

Charles Dent
Minister Responsible for
Western Transition Planning

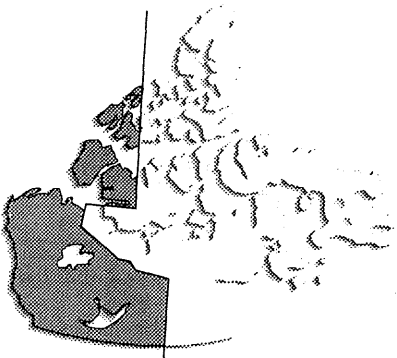
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Introduction

On April 1, 1999 the map of Canada will change. The existing NWT will be formally divided so as to establish a Western territory made up of the Mackenzie Valley and Beaufort Sea areas, and an eastern territory of Nunavut. The system of governance that has evolved in the NWT during the last three decades will be fundamentally altered. Legislative, executive, judicial, administrative and intergovernmental structures, processes and relationships will all be affected. This transformation is already advanced and is speeding up as we move closer to 1999. It is a process of change that is intricate and complex to manage. While it proceeds, the continuity of programs and services must be maintained. Western Members must therefore seek to ensure a smooth transition to a Western territory while at the same time participating in the day-to-day running of government and supporting the establishment of an effective Nunavut administration.

There has sometimes been a perception that the main focus of transition planning and implementation to establish two territories has been on measures required for Nunavut. It is important to recognize that the GNWT has undertaken some transition planning for the West and that a good deal of the transition planning carried out up to now affects both territories.



Equally important is the recognition that the West's agenda for change is basically different from that of Nunavut. The West does not face as severe a challenge as Nunavut in ensuring the continuity of territorial programs and services after April 1, 1999. The West has its essential governmental infrastructure in place and will not need to set up the legislative, executive, judicial, financial and administrative systems that Nunavut will need to have set up. This gives the West a firmer planning base as 1999 approaches. It is, nevertheless, true that it is now the time to sharpen the focus on the steps to be taken over the next 18 months to ensure a smooth transition to a new Western territory.

The purpose of this report is therefore to provide the context for Western transition planning and implementation and to lay out an action plan with specific initiatives which will be undertaken in the next 18 months.

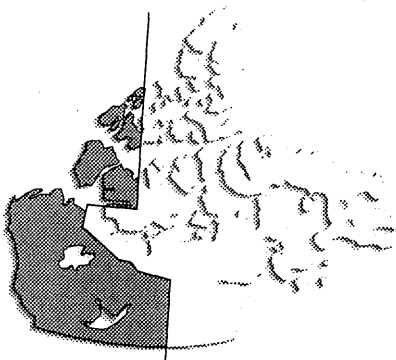


Context

This action plan was developed taking into account the key factors outlined below:

Aboriginal Claims, Self Government and Western Constitutional Development Initiatives

A number of Western Aboriginal organizations are or will soon be involved in self government negotiations. In addition, the Aboriginal Summit and the Western Caucus have formed a partnership called the Constitutional Working Group to develop a constitutional proposal for the Western territory. Transition planning and implementation must recognize that self government and the Constitutional Working Group process will have a significant influence on the restructuring of government at the territorial level. In this context, the principal purpose of the transition action plan needs to be clearly understood. It is to ensure the continuity of territorial programs and services. The implementation of this plan will thus in no way prejudice the outcomes of self-government negotiations or of the Western constitutional process.



Public Expectations

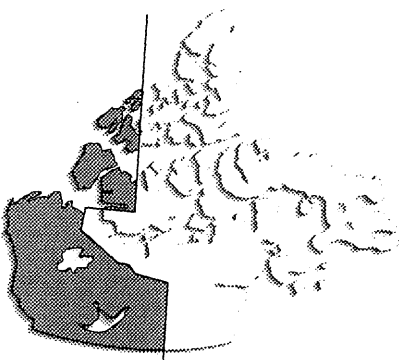
There is an expectation by the general public in the West that creation of two new territories will not have a significant impact on their day-to-day lives. They want hospitals, schools and other government services to operate the same way on April 1, 1999 as on March 31, 1999. A fundamental principle for transition planning is the need to maintain acceptable levels of program and service delivery in the West.



Economic Impacts on the West.

There will be economic impacts on the West arising from division. The establishment of a Nunavut government means that some government jobs with headquarters functions will no longer be needed in the West and will be transferred to Nunavut. Transition planning has to take into account the impact that the loss of these jobs and incomes will have on the Western economy and tax base.

Care must be taken during the transition process to preserve sufficient stability to retain the confidence of investors and of the business community in general. In addition, economic development initiatives will be required to off-set the loss of government jobs in the Western territory as a result of division.



Relations with Nunavut

Given the short time remaining until division occurs, the future Government of Nunavut is not likely to be in a position to fully manage the delivery of the complete range of territorial programs and services to its residents on April 1, 1999. In some cases, infrastructure requirements alone will preclude this. Some programs, like hospital care and correctional services, will likely be delivered on a contractual basis by the West until the Nunavut government is fully operational and has sufficient facilities of its own. Contracts between the GNWT and the Interim Commissioner of Nunavut in such areas, and possibly certain other service areas, may be negotiated. Transition planning will need to provide for such options. By providing for economies of scale in the provision of services, such agreements will generally be to the benefit of both territories for a transitional period. In the West, the "downsizing" impact of division will be diminished while Nunavut will be able to access services and facilities to which its residents have traditionally had access. The existing knowledge and experience of the GNWT in providing such programs and services can thus be made available to assist the Government of Nunavut for such time as may be agreed upon.

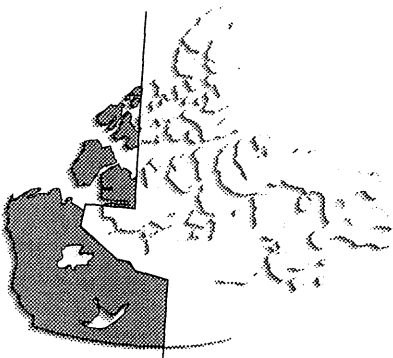
At the same time it is important to ensure that facilities are adequate to Western needs. The Yellowknife Correctional Centre, as an important example, is no longer large enough to serve the whole of the present NWT. Following division the needs of the Western territory must continue to be met. Agreements with the Interim Commissioner for Nunavut regarding the use of Western facilities and the contracting for certain government services from the Western territory must not be to the detriment of the provision of programs and services to Western residents.



Relations with the Federal Government

The federal government has an important role in the Western transition process, particularly in recognizing that it must also adjust its focus to give Western transition requirements the priority that they require as well as provide the incremental financial resources that are needed to create two new territories. The commitment to meet the reasonable incremental costs of division was given by the federal government in the Nunavut Political Accord, in which the federal government also recognized that the future Western and Nunavut governments should have the opportunity to continue to provide public services for residents, "recognizing the existing scope and quality of such services." In addition, intergovernmental arrangements and appointments to federal boards and agencies must accord the future Western territory a status comparable to that of the present NWT.

The funding issues are being handled by the Minister of Finance, with advice from the Western Coalition, in negotiations and discussions with the federal government. Other key transition issues which will require federal attention are discussed on the following pages.



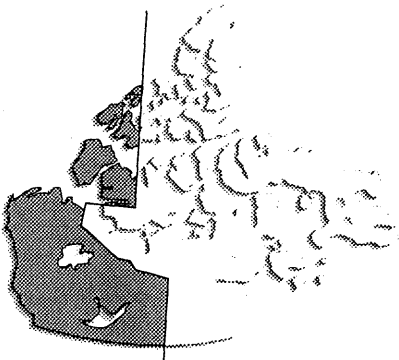
Commissioner of the Western Territory

Steps will need to be taken to ensure that the Western territory and Nunavut is each represented by its own resident Commissioner upon division. No less important is that the Commissioner's present role be formally recognized and provided for. Over the last thirty years, the office of Commissioner has evolved from that of an active "hands on" administrator to an equally important but more symbolic role like that of the Lieutenant-Governor of a province. The issuance of a Ministerial letter of instruction, pursuant to the *NWT Act*, to the first Commissioner of the Western territory may be an appropriate instrument to accomplish the objective of confirming the Commissioner's contemporary role.



Senate Representation

The *Constitution Act (No. 2), 1975* provides for the Yukon and the NWT to be represented in the Senate by one member each. Currently, the NWT is represented by a Senator resident in that part of the NWT that will form Nunavut in 1999 and this poses a potential problem since Senators are required to be resident in the jurisdiction that they represent. An important requirement is therefore, for the Parliament of Canada to enact legislation that will provide for the separate representation in the Senate of the Western territory, Nunavut and Yukon.



NWT Act Amendment

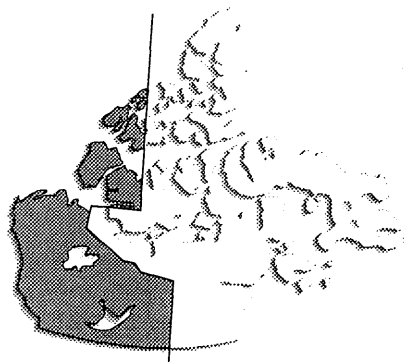
As earlier noted, the Constitutional Working Group has been established for the purpose of developing a constitution framed to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of the West. However, pending the completion of this constitutional process, an amendment will be needed to the *NWT Act*. The departure of the 10 Nunavut MLAs from the Legislative Assembly in 1999 will reduce the size of the Assembly to 14 Members. Since the *NWT Act* currently provides for an Assembly with a minimum of 15 Members the *Act* should be amended to reduce the minimum size of the Assembly to 14 Members.



Adjustments to Central Institutions of Government

During the past three decades, the evolution of territorial institutions like the Legislative Assembly and the Cabinet has been determined by the need to respect the differences between Nunavut and the West while making sure that the interests of all NWT residents are represented. This will formally change on April 1, 1999 and transition planning is required now to make sure that adjustments are made for the efficient operation of Western institutions after April 1, 1999. Changes are likely to be of an interim nature until the self government and constitutional development processes determine what government at the territorial level will look like in the West. Examples of where adjustments will be required in the central institutions of government include:

- The way in which the Legislative Assembly's committees are structured and operate;
- The number of Western Cabinet Ministers between April 1, 1999 and the swearing in of Cabinet Ministers following the fall, 1999 election;
- How the Western budgets for the 1999-2000 fiscal year and subsequent budgets for the West will be prepared and considered in the budgetary planning cycles of the GNWT and the Legislative Assembly; and
- The electoral boundaries and perhaps the number of seats in the Western Legislative Assembly.



Shared Institutions

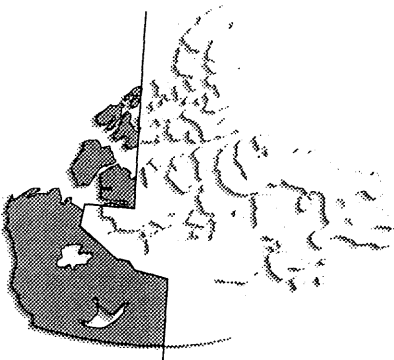
In some cases, economies of scale favour the continuation of institutions that will be shared or jointly owned or mandated by the Western territory and Nunavut. The most notable of these are the NWT Power Corporation and the Workers' Compensation Board. Legislation to provide for these shared institutions, that will require the agreement of the Interim Commissioner of Nunavut and the GNWT to implement, will be required within the next year. The setting up of such bodies will not preclude either the Western territory or Nunavut from ending a shared institution arrangement or from establishing or mandating a separate body at some future date.



Relations with GNWT Employees

While planning and carrying out division implementation activities, the GNWT must also ensure the effective day-to-day operation of the government and the continuing delivery of programs and services. An important consideration in reconciling these two potentially contradictory objectives is the need for predictability in the public service and labour relations environment. Transition planning must take into account the potential impact of the creation of two new territories on the careers and personal lives of many GNWT employees. A smooth transition requires stability in the public service and steps are required to ensure that members of the public service will have an accurate understanding of their status and roles in the administration of a Western territory. Communication and consultation with government employees and their collective bargaining agents will play an important part in ensuring this understanding.

In connection with this need, the parties to the Nunavut Political Accord have agreed that those headquarters employees who wish to relocate from the West to Nunavut upon division will receive priority consideration for hiring by the Interim Commissioner of Nunavut. Further steps in the implementation of this agreement must be taken expeditiously.



Human Resources Development

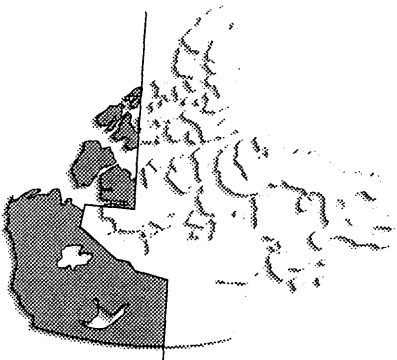
The development of a public service for the Western territory that will be representative of the population that it serves is an important part of preparing Western residents for future jobs and employment in the Western territory. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment's published study, *Employment Equity in GNWT Headquarters and Western GNWT Regional Positions* provides a basis for future work in this regard. However, the goal of a representative public service must be complemented by a human resources development strategy that also prepares Western residents for opportunities in the private sector. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment's study entitled *Snapshot of the Western NWT Labour Market* provides a detailed analysis of the characteristics of the labour market in the Western Arctic thus allowing human resources development and training programs to be developed to meet workforce needs.

In 1997-98, the GNWT will spend approximately \$97.6 million on education and training within the Western NWT, including investments in Aurora College, mine training, workplace basic skills and youth employment. Community-based delivery of adult basic education and labour market training programs means that residents will be better able to take advantage of the range of employment opportunities available in the Western NWT.



Communication with Western Stakeholders and the Public

There are a number of key stakeholders in the West who, along with all Western residents, need to be kept informed and involved in the planning for and implementing of transition measures for a new Western territory. An early step has been taken with the appointment of a Minister Responsible for Western Transition Planning. Additional measures will be required to make sure that stakeholders and the public are kept fully informed.



What Must Be Done?

An action plan must take into account what is achievable in the short period of 18 months that remains until two separate territories are created. This means considering the current workload of the Assembly and GNWT; the ability of the administration to respond; resources which will be made available for Western transition planning and implementation; the time which is required to prepare for and make decisions; and making the best use of time to manage the process.

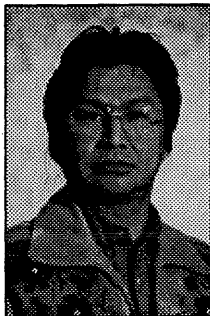




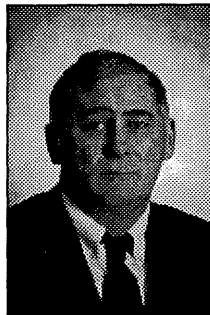
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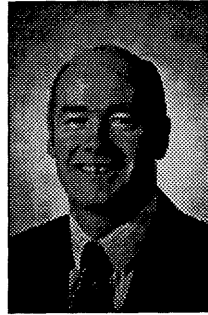
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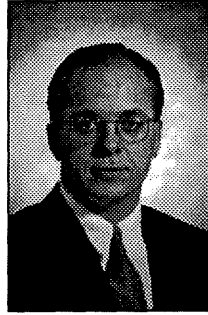
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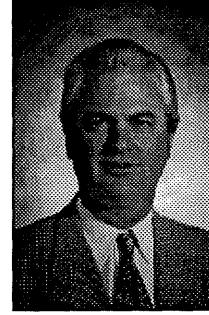
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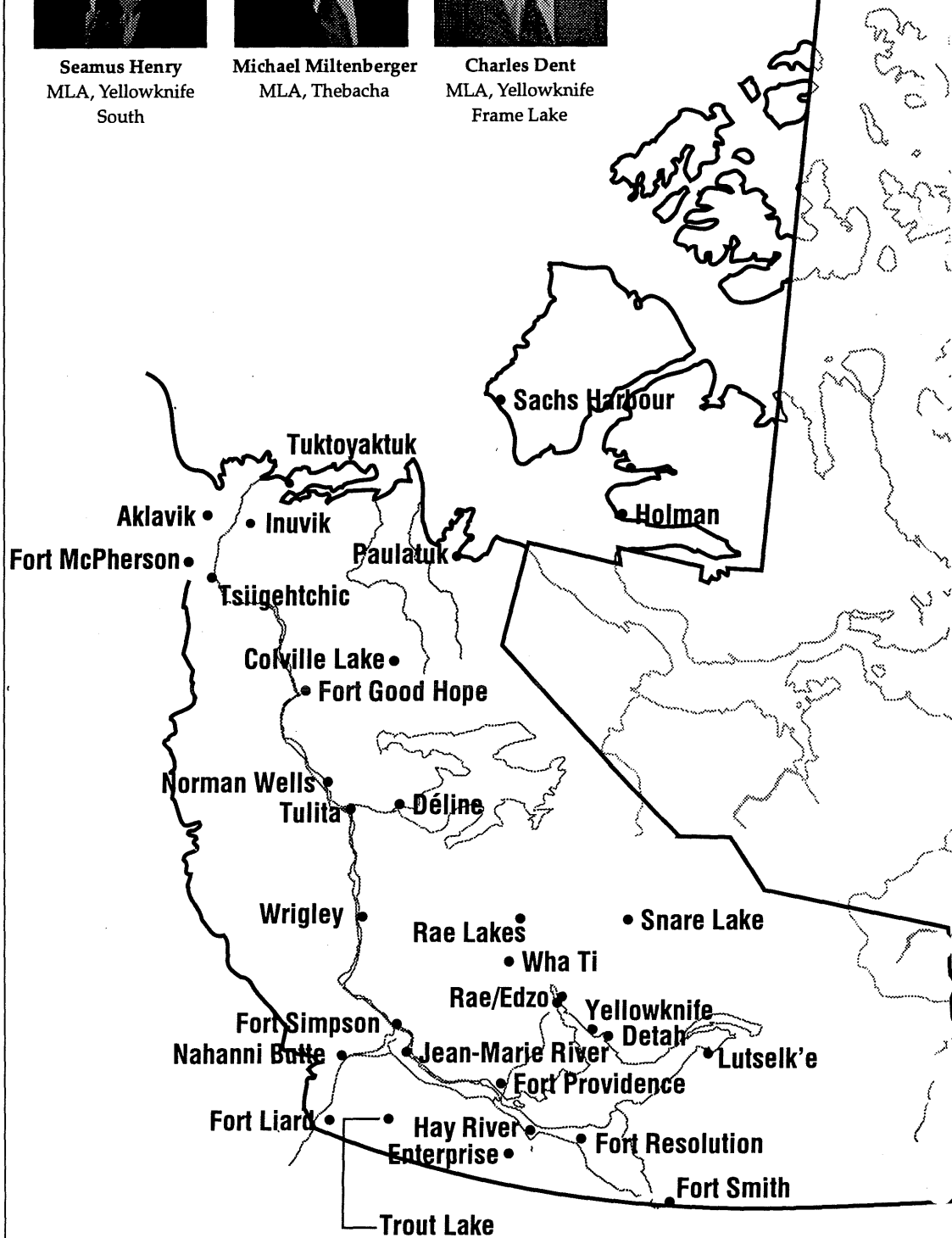
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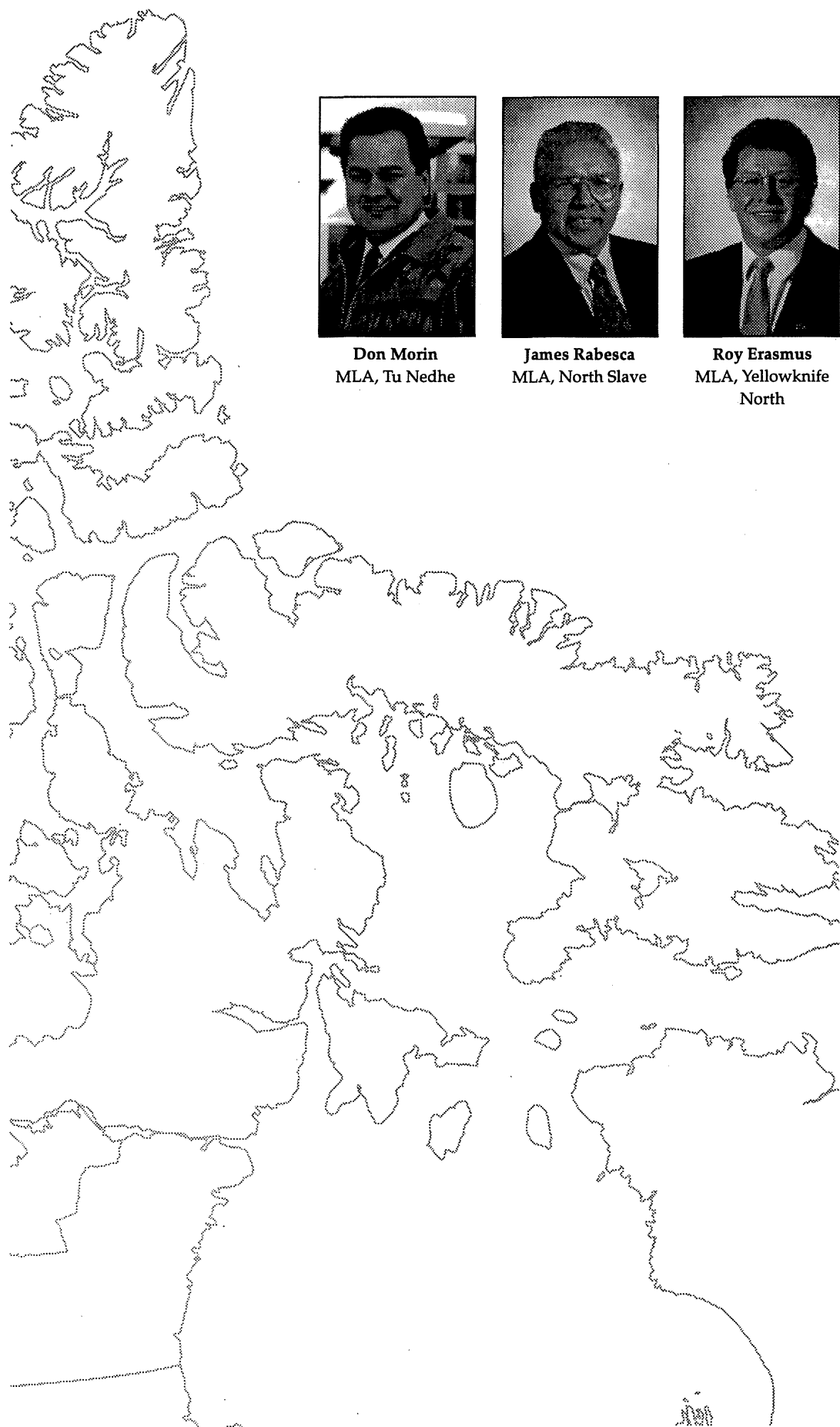


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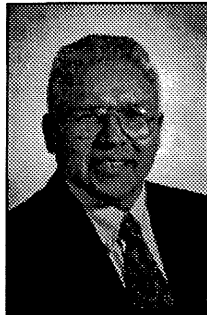


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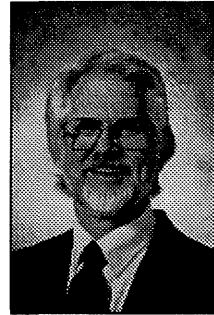
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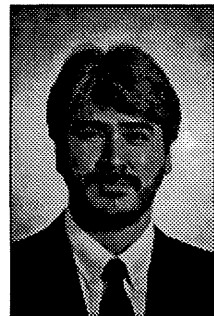
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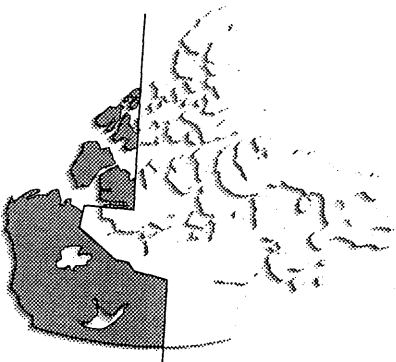
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Action Plan

During the summer and fall of 1997, Western Ministers and Caucus have considered the circumstances they will be facing over the next 18 months and have made a commitment to implement a transition plan which ensures a focus on the requirements of the West. In setting their priorities they have established a number of short, medium and long term measures which are outlined in the following pages.



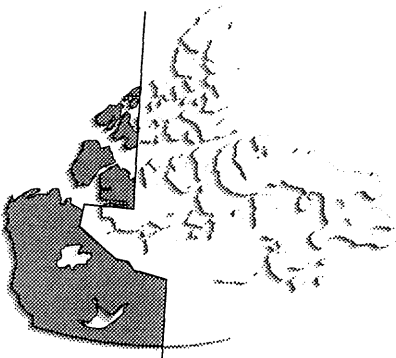
Short Term Measures

During the period between the fall of 1997 and the early winter of 1998, the following short term measures will be implemented:

- Extensive briefings on Western transition planning will be provided to NWT Members of Parliament, the Aboriginal Summit, the Constitutional Working Group, the Western Coalition and the Interim Commissioner of Nunavut. Non-government organizations with an interest in the transition process, like the NWT Association of Municipalities, the NWT Chamber of Commerce, professional associations and collective bargaining agents will also be provided information and consulted on the division process, especially in those areas of particular concern to them;
- An offer will be made to the Interim Commissioner of Nunavut for the Western territorial government, where appropriate, to provide certain programs and services to Nunavut after April 1, 1999 and until the Nunavut government is able to deliver these responsibilities itself;
- A public information program will be developed and implemented to keep Western residents informed of transition developments and to ensure that Western MLAs are able to communicate information on a timely basis;



- A review of the impact of division on the West's economy and the GNWT's administration will be initiated, including the identification of measures such as economic development and work force adjustment programs which will be required to offset this impact; and
- The Minister Responsible for Division and for the Financial Management Board will develop a report on Western transition costs in consultation with the Minister Responsible for Western Transition. This report will be supplementary to the two previous analyses of the transition process and associated costs.



Medium Term Measures

For the period from now to April 1, 1999, the following medium term measures will be implemented:

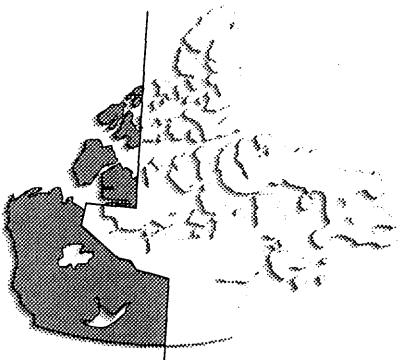
- A process to establish the Western territory's budget for fiscal year 1999/2000 will be developed and implemented;
- Western Caucus will work with the Western Coalition and the Minister of Finance to ensure that negotiations are completed with the federal government on new formula financing arrangements which will be the basis for future financial transfers from Ottawa;
- Representations will be made for the purpose of ensuring that Parliament enacts legislation to provide for all three territories to be represented in the Senate, for a Western Commissioner, and territorial representatives on federal boards and agencies to be appointed by April 1, 1999;
- Representations will be made to secure the enactment by Parliament of an amendment to the *NWT Act* to allow the 13th Assembly to continue to operate with only 14 Members after April 1, 1999; and
- An *Interim Supply Bill* for the period between April 1, 1999 and the tabling of a budget by the first Western government will be ready for consideration by the Assembly by April 1, 1999.



Long Term Measures

For the transition period between April 1, 1999 and shortly after the Western general election in the fall of 1999, the following measures will be implemented:

- Two additional Western Members will be selected to join the four Western Ministers remaining in Cabinet to serve during the transition period following April 1, 1999 to the swearing in of a new government following the fall Western territorial election;
- A decision will be made on the number and mandates of Committees of the Legislative Assembly which will operate during the transition period between April 1, 1999 and the dissolution of the 13th Assembly; and
- A transition report will be prepared by the Premier to be made available to Members of the 14th Assembly.



Conclusion

This action plan sets out some of the challenging but achievable objectives for Members of the Western Caucus in the period leading up to April 1, 1999. In setting these objectives, Members recognize that they need to continue to ensure that programs and services are not disrupted during the transition period and that implementation of a separate Nunavut administration proceeds on a timely basis. Furthermore, transition measures must recognize that further change in territorial institutions of government will result from self government and Western constitutional development initiatives.

It is time to adjust the division focus to properly take into account the future of the West. In the coming months, the public and key Western stakeholders will be regularly informed about the implementation of measures outlined in this report.



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