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**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**18<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

**TERRITORIAL LEADERSHIP  
COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, December 9, 2015**

Pages 1 - 8

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

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**Mr. Glen Abernethy**  
(Great Slave)

**Mr. Bob McLeod**  
(Yellowknife South)

**Mr. Wally Schumann**  
(Hay River South)

**Mr. Tom Beaulieu**  
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

**Mr. Robert C. McLeod**  
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Louis Sebert**  
(Thebacha)

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

**Mr. Daniel McNeely**  
(Sahtu)

**Mr. RJ Simpson**  
(Hay River North)

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

**Mr. Alfred Moses**  
(Inuvik Boot Lake)

**Mr. Kieron Testart**  
(Kam Lake)

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

**Mr. Michael Nadli**  
(Deh Cho)

**Mr. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)

**Mr. Jackson Lafferty**  
(Monfwi)

**Mr. Herbert Nakimayak**  
(Nunakput)

**Mr. Cory Vanthuyne**  
(Yellowknife North)

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

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**CALL TO ORDER ..... 1**

**PRAYER..... 1**

**REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA..... 1**

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY..... 1**

**NOMINATIONS OF PREMIER ..... 2**

**CANDIDATES' SPEECHES ..... 2**

    Mr. Glen Abernethy's Candidacy Speech ..... 2

    Mr. Bob McLeod's Candidacy Speech ..... 5

**ADJOURNMENT ..... 8**



**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, December 9, 2015****Members Present**

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Ms. Cochrane, Ms. Green, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Bob McLeod, Mr. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Mr. Schumann, Mr. Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Call to Order**

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Tim Mercer. As Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to call this first meeting of the Territorial Leadership Committee to order and to preside over the nominations for Premier and the subsequent candidate speeches. I would like you to rise and I would ask Mr. Moses to please lead us in prayer.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Mr. Moses. Before we begin today, I'd like to take note of some special visitors in the visitors gallery today. Mr. Anthony W.J. Whitford, former Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, Speaker, Minister, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Sergeant-at-Arms, Honourary Clerk at the Table. Welcome, Mr. Whitford.

---Applause

I would also like to welcome Mr. Joseph Handley, Member of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. He was only the Premier. Welcome, Mr. Handley.

---Applause

A Member of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, Ms. Bisaro. Welcome, Ms. Bisaro.

---Applause

A Member of the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, Mr. Robert Bouchard. Welcome, Mr. Bouchard.

---Applause

As mentioned, this is the first meeting of the Territorial Leadership Committee for the Members of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. All Members have a copy of the agenda in front of them.

**Review and Adoption of Agenda**

The next item on the agenda is the review and adoption of the agenda. Are there any additions or

deletions to the agenda? Seeing none, is the agenda adopted? Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Agreed. The agenda is adopted. Thank you, Members.

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

Members and those following along in the public gallery and at home, welcome. Members, you have agreed to a process to select the Premier that varies significantly from the past. Since the 14<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, the nomination and selection of a new Premier occurred in a single day within the span of a few hours.

As you have just agreed, the process for selecting a Premier for the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly will be divided into two distinct stages. Today those Members wishing to allow their names to stand for Premier will each identify themselves publicly and make a speech of up to 20 minutes. Following these speeches, the Territorial Leadership Committee will adjourn for roughly one week, until Wednesday, December 16, 2015, at 9:00 a.m., when you will first select a Speaker. Following this, a question and answer period will be held between all Members and the candidates for Premier, followed by a secret ballot selection of a Premier.

Later that afternoon you will proceed to identify, hear speeches from and elect Members of the Executive Council according to the 2-2-2, or the North, South, Yellowknife custom that has been used by previous Assemblies.

Now, with regard to technical matters, Members should be aware that you are not required to turn your microphones on or off. That will be done automatically for you by our sound technicians.

Also in front of Members and built into your desks are the timing mechanisms. When speeches are being made, the clocks will count down the time available to you, and you are asked to be mindful of the time limits that have been set and agreed to by all Members.

I wish to make Members aware that today's proceedings are being broadcast live on the Legislative Assembly television network and on CKLB. Our proceedings today are being simultaneously translated in the Chipewyan language. Chipewyan interpretation is available on channel 2 of your audio devices.

I would also like to remind Members that although this is a less formal committee than the House itself, Members making speeches are asked to please stand while speaking.

### Nominations for Premier

The next item on the agenda is item 5, nominations for Premier. The Premier nominations and candidate speeches guidelines are in your packages. As per the guidelines, my first duty is to ask all Members who wish to allow their names to stand for the position of Premier to please rise in their places. You can do so now.

Thank you. Mr. Glen Abernethy, Member for Great Slave, and Mr. Bob McLeod, Member for Yellowknife South, have indicated that they wish to be considered for the position of Premier. Therefore, the nominees for the Premier's position are as follows: Mr. Glen Abernethy, Member for Great Slave, and Mr. Bob McLeod, Member for Yellowknife South.

Each candidate is permitted to make a 20-minute speech. The speeches will be made in alphabetical order by surname. I will first call upon Mr. Glen Abernethy to make a speech. Mr. Abernethy, you have the floor.

#### Mr. Glen Abernethy's Candidacy Speech

**MR. ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Before I get started, I just want to take a minute to congratulate all of you on your recent election and swearing-in to the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. Welcome to the building.

During the evening of November 23<sup>rd</sup>, I watched the election results roll in from across the Northwest Territories. As the night went on, I became more and more excited by the results. Between the 11 new Members and the eight returning Members, I feel – actually, I know – that we have a new energy, new ideas, and with a wide range of diverse backgrounds in this Assembly, we have a real opportunity to shape how we do business in the best interest of all residents of the Northwest Territories.

The results of the election were a clear signal to me, and to others across the territory, that the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and the Government of the Northwest Territories need to do things in a

different way. The status quo is no longer acceptable.

As I sat down to write this speech, I reviewed a number of speeches from previous Territorial Leadership Meetings. There was a common thread. They all focused on the issues that a Premier-candidate would make a priority during their four-year term. I could easily have written a similar party-based speech. Instead, I want to focus on how we can do things differently together, to not only guarantee the success of our priorities but also how we can build a stronger territory.

Former Premiers would no doubt argue that this has been the premise of their platforms, as well, and I believe that there are key pieces that we need to have in place to make this happen. Before submitting my name to stand before you today, I spent a significant amount of time thinking about, and discussing with many of you, the Premier's role. Simply put: Within the context of consensus government, a Premier is the first among equals, and the role of the Premier is to help bring our collective vision and priorities to reality. It is not to set priorities for this Assembly without the direction of this Assembly.

He or she is one of 19 who's granted the honour of working with and for Members to ensure that our agreed-upon priorities are acted upon by the public service. He or she is one of 19 who is granted the honour of representing the Northwest Territories in government-to-government relationships: community, Aboriginal, federal, as well as international.

He or she is one of 19 who is granted the privilege of speaking and acting on behalf of the GNWT during good times as well as challenging times. The Premier must be a lightning rod when required and a voice of reason and deliberation when needed.

He or she also has a critical role in ensuring the collaborative and productive working relationship between Cabinet, Regular Members, stakeholders and the public.

During the election and over the last couple of weeks, this is an area where we have all heard that things need to be done differently. The only way that we, as politicians, can truly help the strong territory is by working together, working with each other here in this building, working together with Aboriginal and community governments, working with stakeholders, working with and including residents. We must be inclusive and we must be transparent in our approach. We must be open to new ways of doing business and of opening up this institution and government to create new ideas and ways of doing business. We have to help build bridges, rather than create barriers.

There will be times when we agree and there will be times when we disagree. In my time as a Minister, I know that disagreement often leads to robust discussions which can produce the best results. I look forward to these discussions and debates, because it is our responsibility to explore differing opinions. Everyone elected in the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly has issues that are important to the residents they represent, and it's that collective approach that will help us achieve our collective goals.

If elected as Premier, I will work closely with all Members to help move collective priorities forward. I commit to being part of the team that is the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. This is obviously easier said than done. Anybody can say they'll work together. The trick is actually doing it.

I believe that through my previous experience, I've already demonstrated that this is how I do business. I strongly believe that past actions predict future behaviour. During the past few years I've been guided by what I would want to see in my MLA: hard work, commitment, integrity and an understanding of the issues in front of them.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, the Members told me that they wanted a Minister who believed in and is guided by these values. Taking this to heart as a Minister in the last government, I worked closely with committees; and with direction and support, I took action on issues important to residents of the Northwest Territories. This is a commitment to listening to all sides of an issue, answering questions, encouraging understanding and respecting differences of opinion. I took this approach as an MLA and as a Minister, resulting in significant advancements, improved services and programs, and partnerships at community, business and government levels.

As an example, I led the GNWT's development of an Anti-Poverty Framework that included local citizens, NGOs, local governments, businesses, industry and the GNWT working together on a framework to eliminate poverty in the Northwest Territories. Although the GNWT held the pen on the development of this framework, the words that flowed from this collaboration were those of the stakeholders, not the government. This was the first time that the GNWT had entered into this type of collaborative process. I have to say, it wasn't without its struggles. However, in the end, we were able to come together and develop a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Framework that has formed the backbone of the GNWT Anti-Poverty Action Plan as well as the territorial Anti-Poverty Action Plan. This kind of outside-the-box thinking and collaboration needs to be utilized to a greater degree by this government.

It was also important for me to participate in the anti-poverty roundtables. Rather than just making a speech, I attended the entire meetings. I needed to understand the poverty issues in the NWT and the impact that they had on residents, and I believe this has resulted in better and more important decisions.

Another example, I followed through on my commitment from the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly to improve child and family services in the Northwest Territories by bringing forward, with the direction and support from committee, Building Stronger Families, an action plan to transform child and family services. This action plan focuses on supporting families and providing them with the tools they need to raise children in a healthy and happy environment. The Standing Committee on Social Programs and residents from across the territory were critical in moving this forward. We are in the first of a three-year rollout of this initiative, and I'm excited to see this change become a reality over the coming years.

As a final example, I led the NWT Health and Social Services Transformation Initiative to improve focus on patients and clients. Transforming and improving health care in the Northwest Territories is something that has been talked about for years, but until now hasn't really been realized. For this to be successful, it's critical for me, as a Minister, to travel to every community in the Northwest Territories to talk with residents about the system, hear their frustrations and especially their recommendations for improvement. These community-based discussions helped us all create a plan to move forward.

I also convened a meeting with Aboriginal leadership to discuss ways to improve health and social services. This was the first time that this type of meeting was convened to discuss these critical issues. Ultimately, this work will allow the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly to make progressive changes for our health and social services system that will positively affect the health and well-being of all NWT residents.

As I indicated earlier, I strongly believe that our past action often predicts our future behaviour. I shared my recent experiences with you as evidence that I don't support the status quo, that I've worked hard with my previous colleagues, the public, Aboriginal governments and others, to bring about change within our public service.

I think that the key to a stronger future is innovation and a willingness to approach things differently. Albert Einstein said that insanity is defined as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Moving forward, we need to do things differently.

There are issues the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly must work together on to resolve the steadily increasing cost of living across the Territories. The GNWT's operating costs continue to climb. As a government, we no longer have the financial resources to continue doing business as usual. Low commodity prices, large amounts of land and interim withdrawals, and uncertainty in our regulatory process are discouraging investment, exploration and development of non-renewable resources. The diamond mines – the most significant contributors to our territorial GDP – all have closure dates that are rapidly approaching, and with no new significant developments, we risk further reduction to our overall revenues.

Our education system struggles to adequately prepare our youth for post-secondary education and meaningful employment opportunities, particularly in our rural and remote communities. There are limited opportunities or supports for post-secondary studies at a community and a regional level.

Many residents throughout the territory continue to struggle with mental health and addictions issues. Homelessness continues to be a significant challenge. Climate change and its negative effects on the NWT continue to provide costs and jeopardize future generations. Traditional lifestyles and Aboriginal languages have created a strong cultural foundation for our vibrant, diverse territory and we must make their preservation and revitalization a priority.

This is just a short list of the challenges that this Assembly needs to address over the next four years.

On December 14<sup>th</sup> we will all have an opportunity to stand in this House and publicly discuss what we heard during the election campaign and set priorities together to address these issues.

Consensus government is about relationships. It can only be effective when respecting dignity for each other is maintained and committed to by all Members, regardless of where you sit in this House.

If elected Premier, I commit to you, and to all the residents of the Northwest Territories, to build, maintain and foster relationships between all levels of government. If elected Premier, I commit to meeting with our Aboriginal partners in the Dehcho and the Akaitcho territories to develop a cooperative plan to move land claim negotiations forward. We have an opportunity to build upon the successes of the Deline Agreement and the Thaidene Nene negotiations that can provide real results in this area.

With respect to our struggling economy, we cannot ignore the environment and socially responsible

resource extraction opportunities in the Northwest Territories. We must think and act differently with respect to local and sustainable economic opportunity like biomass production, environmentally responsible energy production, agriculture, arts and cultures, fishing and tourism. As a government, we must do more to support these industries.

If elected as Premier, I will work closely with committee, Cabinet and stakeholders, like the chambers of commerce and the Chamber of Mines, to create priorities for investments in these areas. We may need to consider some short-term debt to make this critical investment.

As I indicated previously, many of our youth in the Territories are struggling to find meaningful employment or take advantage of opportunities available in the North. We need to think big here; they are our future. The key to our long-term viability is our next generation. We need old measures to get them to stay in school, to make healthy choices and connect with their language and culture. We need to provide them with opportunities, have them believe in themselves and see a future where they play a role in shaping and changing our society. I'm not suggesting we stop everything else; however, if we don't make radical changes the way we create and prepare our youth, we might not have any choices.

If elected as Premier, I want to work with you and other stakeholders, to create programs that will better prepare our youth for the future. Over the coming weeks, we will work together to define the priorities of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. From there, Cabinet will draft a mandate for consideration and review by Regular Members, based on those mutually agreed upon priorities, once consensus is reached between all Members on the mandate for government. Between there we'll prepare individual mandate letters to Ministers, based on agreed upon mandates.

If elected as Premier, I want to go further than issuing mandate letters stating what needs to be done. I believe strongly that these mandate letters must also indicate how things will be done. Typically, that Ministers must work closely with Members and adhere to all agreed upon protocols. Ministers must travel to every community in the Northwest Territories and participate in public meetings to discuss community issues and concerns. Ministers must provide program briefings to committee that are open to the public. Public dialogue and input must be fostered and encouraged in the development of major initiatives. Transparency and openness will be a requirement.

If elected, these individual mandate letters will be made public. This will ensure that all Ministers and the Premier can all be evaluated during mid-term



reviews, based on their performance in needs areas.

As I said previously, consensus government is about relationships. However, another key component to its success is information. All Members must be informed of ongoing initiatives, challenges and opportunities in order to make informed decisions. These mandate letters will help foster a healthy two-way flow of information and ideas.

Members, today Bob McLeod and I are seeking your support to be Premier of the Northwest Territories. I applaud Mr. McLeod for his dedication over the last four years, serving the people of the Northwest Territories in this capacity. This election has clearly demonstrated that Northerners no longer accept the status quo. We can and we must do things differently. I believe that this Assembly has the opportunity to do things differently.

I would like to conclude with a quote that has come to mean a lot to me during my eight years as a politician and will continue to help guide me over the next four years as your Premier. Joseph Howe, a Nova Scotian journalist, politician and public servant said, "My public life is before you; and I know you'll believe me when I say, that when I sit down in solitude to the labours of my profession, the only questions I ask myself are: What is right? What is just? What is for the public good?"

I want to take everything I have learned and experienced, as a Northerner, an MLA and a Minister, to represent you and all people of the Northwest Territories as the 13<sup>th</sup> Premier of the Northwest Territories. Thank you so much.

---Applause

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you. I will now call upon the second person who let their name stand for the position of Premier, Bob McLeod, Member for Yellowknife South. Mr. McLeod, the floor is yours.

#### **Mr. Bob McLeod's Candidacy Speech**

**MR. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you. Welcome, fellow MLAs. Today I am seeking your support for the position of Premier for the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. People are probably familiar with Bob McLeod the politician, but I would like to reacquaint you with Bob McLeod the man.

I am much like many of the people who elected us. I am a husband, father and a grandfather who wants my children and grandchildren to have a bright future, full of opportunities.

I am a proud Metis person, who grew up in Fort Providence along the banks of the Mackenzie River, with a deep respect and understanding for the Aboriginal values and traditions that continue to

be central to territorial society and politics. I have spent my entire career working to make a difference for the people of the Northwest Territories, especially advancing territorial and federal policies that have improved life and living conditions in the North.

Some of my proudest achievements include representing the Northwest Territories in the first meetings that paved the way for the cooperative management of waters in the Mackenzie River Basin and the development of international standards on humane trapping. As a politician, I was honoured to be part of the Legislative Assembly that saw devolution become a reality after decades of discussion. I was also proud of the steps our government took to strengthen its relationships with Aboriginal and other northern governments. I am an experienced and committed consensus builder who believes we are always stronger and more successful when we find common ground for working together.

Before we speak about specific priorities for our Assembly, I would like to address the kind of government people have said they want to see. As leaders, we have to talk about the serious issues we need to address, the social challenges that need our urgent attention, the troubling population migration rates, the high cost of living, including the high cost of energy, and stalled resource investments. People all over the Northwest Territories see and feel the effect of these issues and they want a government with a vision and an agenda that is positive, ambitious and focused on their concerns. If elected as your Premier, I will, with your help, make that vision a reality.

People also want change. That was a very clear message we all heard during the election campaign and one I am committed to honouring. People want a government that reflects their values and priorities. They want accessible leaders and they want a role in shaping government decisions. Aspiring to that desire for change has been a major theme in our discussions this week.

Members have demonstrated their commitments to change and have already shared many good ideas. I welcome the commitment and look forward to working with every one of you, to give the people of the Northwest Territories the kind of government they want and deserve.

The Legislative Assembly should be a place for policy and decision-making. We must achieve better, more effective and transparent decisions for the people of the Northwest Territories. People expect more of that from us and less politics. We will need to have further discussion on how we live up to those expectations together. But one thing we need is a more cooperative approach and new mechanisms to enable greater input from Regular

Members. I cannot say what shape those will take, but it could include, as an example, measures like more joint committees on critical issues such as climate change and family violence.

While we share the responsibility for creating a more open and effective government, there are also some steps that a new Cabinet could take to support that goal. Should you choose me to be Premier, I propose to name a Minister responsible for transparency and democratic engagement. That Minister would be tasked with taking the lead on developing an open-government policy. With input from Members, that would guarantee that right of Northwest Territories residents to participate in and influence the decisions and policies of their government. To make government more visible and accessible to the people it serves, I propose Cabinet hold at least one meeting in each region, complemented by a private meeting with local residents during the first year. Meeting outside of Yellowknife would pave the way for more people to meet the leaders they have elected and give Cabinet the opportunity to take a pulse on what matters to them.

To provide insight into government decisions, I propose each committee of Cabinet hold at least one public meeting during the next year. I propose Cabinet also commit to having public meetings and briefings with Legislative Assembly standing committees whenever practical and possible.

So, what should our priorities be? We will meet soon to set those priorities, but I would like to offer a few thoughts, based on experience. First and foremost, we need to refocus government on core priorities. We need to focus on the need to be more accountable for the commitments we make to and for our people. The primary measure of accountability for any government is fiscal responsibility. We have to live within our means. The outlook for revenue growth for the medium term is flat. This will affect our operating budgets, and this Assembly will need to align expenditures with revenues. While we have a healthy credit rating, we must maintain our commitment to strong fiscal management. If we do not have the money, we will not spend it.

All of this means that we must constrain the growth in government spending. At the same time, we need a plan to grow this economy because a shrinking economy will not give us the resources that we need to invest in the future for health care, schools and roads, all of the services that people need. Will it be hard work? Yes. Will it be worth it? Absolutely.

Here are a few proposed priorities for your consideration. It is not an exhaustive list; we will build that list together. There is no shortage of things to get done. Taking care of each other,

looking after our families, friends and neighbours has been part of the northern way of doing things for generations. Continuing that tradition is clearly important to people of the Northwest Territories. This Assembly needs to respond to that desire and work to create the kind, caring and just society people have said they want.

Our senior citizens and elders paved the way for the territory we have today. We must ensure they receive the support and respect they deserve and that we address their concerns about the continuum of care, extended health benefits and the future availability of seniors housing. We need to make sure that nobody in our territory gets left behind. We need to review how we support our most vulnerable and ensure they have the services they need. That includes making sure they have access to addictions and mental health treatment.

We also have to address the adequacy of financial and housing support for such residents so their efforts to heal and recover are not undermined by the assisted housing and income security fields.

The federal Liberals have promised new investments and affordable housing in seniors facilities and a 10-year investment of nearly \$20 million in social infrastructure. We need to ensure the Northwest Territories and its people are able to benefit from these commitments. I have made the Prime Minister aware that the Northwest Territories is already spending several times more in housing in relation to overall government expenditures than the national average. He is receptive to our needs.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, I believe taking care of each other should be a priority. We tell our kids they need to stay in school, and they have come a long way over the past decade. We are graduating more students than at any time in our history. We need to keep up our end of the bargain by making sure there are jobs for them.

Over the past five years, we have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in new schools and school-based community infrastructure, and Aurora College has expanded its campus and student accommodation. We need to continue this work by supporting smaller community schools and further expansion for Aurora College. The next step is jobs. There is no shortage of jobs. The NWT Mine Training Society has successfully trained and placed more than 1,000 Aboriginal employees in our mining sector. Over the next five years, this sector will need 1,000 more skilled workers, and there are never enough trained health care workers to meet the growing demand on our health care system. The future has never looked better for young job-seekers in the Northwest Territories. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, I believe education and opportunities for youth should be one of our priorities.

Our people want to know that prosperity, jobs and property values are secure for the long term. Our diamond mines have been our engines of prosperity for a decade, but they are not forever. We saw that after the closure of the Snap Lake Mine last week. While it's possible that Snap Lake may go back into production, the mines will begin to wind down over the next eight to 10 years.

To fill the void left when those mines close and to secure our own prosperity, we need to support other environmentally sustainable resource projects and investments, including Gahcho Kue, whose construction is now 80 percent complete, and Prairie Creek and the proposed expansion at Diavik and Ekati. As we evolve, we have to use the authority transferred through devolution to review and develop a made-in-the-North regulatory regime based on northern values and priorities. We need to export the jobs and the resource revenues; at the same time, we need to do more to insulate our communities and residents from the ups and downs of resource industries, by supporting local businesses and economies that are sustainable and more diversified. I believe prosperity through diversification should be another one of the priorities of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

Public infrastructure investments of people put people to work; and at a time when global mining investments are soft, it's important for us to do our part to ensure jobs and prosperity. Studies show that every dollar of infrastructure spending has \$1.70 for final GDP. If chosen as your Premier, I will immediately pursue funding from the new federal government, which has committed to government infrastructure investment. We cannot afford to do everything at once; but if we work together, we can build critical infrastructure that binds our territory and our economy together in a way that has never been seen before. I believe critical infrastructure investments should be another one of the priorities of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

Reducing the cost of living – greater infrastructure is a key to reducing our cost of living. We started down that path in the last Assembly. Investments and continuing to connect communities by road, air and water are helping to reduce transportation costs applied to essentials like food, fuel and pharmaceuticals. We have momentum. We need to keep moving forward.

Government in the Northwest Territories can alter the cost of living in the North to some degree, but the most obvious path to lowering costs is by increasing northern allowances from the federal government. If chosen as your Premier, I will immediately undertake a concerted, focused initiative to convince the Government of Canada to increase the federal northern resident income tax deduction, not just once, but annually. In the 18<sup>th</sup>

Legislative Assembly, I believe reducing our cost of living should be another priority.

We cannot have a discussion about reducing the cost of living without discussing the cost of electricity. Depending on diesel for our power is not only a financial burden for our residents but is harmful to the planet. With the environmental and financial costs of planet change mounting, it is imperative that we invest in new, cleaner energy sources. New technology would likely qualify for the federal government's Energy Sustainability Fund. The new government in Ottawa has committed to invest \$100 million annually in clean technology producers. In reality, when it comes to the challenge of renewable and alternative energy in the North, there is no single answer, no silver bullet. What is right for one community will not necessarily work for another. It will take a diverse portfolio of technologies to create an overall solution.

We have already seen success with solar installations in Fort Simpson and Colville Lake. We have installed or planned biomass systems in communities from Fort Smith to Fort Good Hope. We have studied the potential for geothermal and wind energy. We need to take what we have already done and turn it into energy solutions for communities throughout the territory. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, if chosen as your Premier, I believe finding opportunities for fossil fuels should be another priority.

On to Aboriginal rights. Aboriginal people make up half the population of the Northwest Territories. They should have the same opportunities to participate meaningfully in the political, social and economic life of our territory and share in its benefits.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, all Members agreed that strengthening our relationship with Aboriginal and northern governments is fundamental to achieving any successes. We took that seriously and made it a priority to foster good working relationships with Aboriginal governments and leaders. We demonstrated national leadership in this area with an innovative approach founded on the principles of respect, recognition and responsibility. Achievements included sharing 25 percent of resource revenues with partner Aboriginal governments, addressing the legacy of Aboriginal schools, chairing the first-ever Roundtable on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and chairing the National Aboriginal Affairs Working Group. We need to continue working with our Aboriginal partners to finalize outstanding land claims and self-government agreements.

Land use plans need to be completed in all regions of our territory. Because of the importance of this issue, I propose a joint committee between Regular Members and Cabinet to provide oversight and give

direction to our negotiators on files dealing with Aboriginal land and resource agreements. Let's get these land claim agreements completed, all of them, in the life of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. It will require flexibility and a commitment to agreements based on shared interest, not hard positions. In the end, all residents of the territory will benefit from the certainty several land claims will bring.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, if chosen as your Premier, I believe honouring Aboriginal rights should be another priority.

These are just a few of the priorities we could be addressing. There are many more and I look forward to discussing them more thoroughly in the coming days, but the number one priority is fulfilling the expectations of our people. Our residents want a government that works as hard as they do, one that is focused every day on supporting the economy, creating jobs, one that helps those that need a hand up, and one that helps prepare our young people for future success. My message today is built on experience and the success of our past efforts. However, it is not about the past; it is about the present and the future. The challenges ahead are many, but they will be met through the extraordinary efforts of each of us.

I applaud my colleague, Glen Abernethy, for standing as Premier, and I know we can both do a good job. I would be honoured to serve as your Premier in the Legislative Assembly and respectfully request your support. Thank you very much.

---Applause

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. We have now heard from both candidates who have agreed to let their names stand for the position of Premier. Members, please join me once again in thanking both Members for letting their names stand and for their thoughtful speeches today.

---Applause

### **Adjournment**

We will now recess the Territorial Leadership Committee proceedings until 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, December 16, 2015, at which time the selection process for the positions of Speaker, Premier and Executive Council will proceed. Thank you for your time and attention today. We are adjourned.

---ADJOURNMENT