

November 27, 2023

Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly 4570 48 Street, Yellowknife, NT X1A 3A5

Thank you, Madam Clerk. Good Morning, colleagues.

Thank you for our discussions today and in the last week. I am sitting with your words, and I'm letting them live in my heart and mind. I ask that you please do me the favour to hear my words today with an open heart and mind.

We need a territory that puts people at the center of its decisions and policies, a territory where people are valued and respected for who they are now, a territory where people feel like they have a reasonable chance of getting by and where they don't have to worry about being left behind when times get tough. At their doors, I told residents of Great Slave that as their MLA, I will make it my job to help create a community and territory where everyone can thrive. I want to do this by working to advance the following priorities.

My first priority is also an outcome I believe we must prioritize during this Assembly, making sure nobody in the NWT get left behind. We can do this by focusing on the basics that everybody needs a good place to live, enough money to provide for themselves and their families, and communities that provide more of the goods and services that people rely on locally.

The NWT needs new housing of all types, social, market, and middle housing, to bring down mortgage and rent costs. We also need better programs to look after the housing we already have as well as including climate adaptions for that housing. I'd like to see home heating moved to more renewable NWT industries, namely pellet or wood chip heating, which can also reduce fossil fuel usage.

We need to exhaust every avenue for all types of housing. I'm happy to see recent federal support, but much more needs to be done. The GNWT needs every government, including community and Indigenous, to help secure all federal dollars through every possible initiative. We also need to worker with developers, industry, and trades to get both materials and labour here and working on a consistent basis.

Good intentions to work together will not be enough. We need a plan created for and by all partners who have a role in addressing the housing crisis.

To make sure that no one gets left behind, we must begin to address the cost of living. We all know it is skyrocketing and even folks with good jobs are having trouble making ends meet. Working peep deserve a decent standard of living, and people without or between jobs need to be treated with respect and dignity.



Government needs to be there for its residents protecting the rights of workers and seriously considering new ways to help people meet their financial needs, like guaranteed basic income projects. The Senate of Canada is studying it, and Alternatives North has already reported on it. It is time that this House takes a serious look at it too.

In my first week of knocking doors, I met two mothers in distress. One was desperately worried about losing her federal housing benefit since reinstated due to lobbying by the PSAC. The other was reviewing carbon tax increases yet to come and saw that she would need to downsize her home to be able to continue to properly provide for her family. These are stories that I want to honour in my time standing before you and are examples of the real financial fears that NWT residents have. I know my colleagues have heard similar stories. GBI is a tool that can lessen our residents' pain of just scraping by barely and would help eliminate the fear that people are feeling. Helping communities provide more of what people need is another way to help NWT residents flourish. Buy local isn't just a slogan; it's a northern way of life.

During the pandemic, we saw how fragile supply chains can be. When we spend locally, we support our neighbours with our dollars as well as our kinship and help to grow local businesses and jobs. We need new and innovative solutions for keeping local dollars local based on input and expertise of NWT businesses, chambers of commerce and mines, non government organizations, and communities. And we have to make sure that we have the right policies and programs in place to support a better mix of small and medium size businesses in all NWT communities.

My second priority is a thriving arts and cultural scene. It's not enough to survive. We also need to thrive. Arts help shape the community's identity and creative outlets enhance well being while also supporting the local economy. Collaborating with artists and artisans on what they identify is needed, like a sustainable core funding and pathfinder services for grants, will help sustain and expand a thriving artistic community. It's also important to note that arts and cultural culture is intimately connected to the reinvitation of communities.

It is, in fact, a social service. When the artist run community centre operated in an old church slated for demolition in 2011, they became an unofficial downtown day shelter. People of all walks of life were welcomed and felt safe because they were sharing and taking care of an inclusive community space. The ARCC also attracted people to the downtown core, creating economic spinoffs like folks going to restaurants before or after events.

Arts and cultural arts and culture have practical socioeconomic returns that are being forgotten, and I will not let them be forgotten for the next four years.

My third priority is that people need to come first in the delivery of government services. Government should spend less time defending ineffective policies and processes and spend more time listening to residents so it can offer programs and services that match the needs that residents say that they have.



What we heard shouldn't mean what we want to hear. People in public engagement should be more than an exercise in checking off a box. It should be a genuine effort to learn from and listen to the public and must incorporate feedback where appropriate. Equally important, they must explain why other feedback was not used.

When I was in the public service, I made it a point to ask how can I help you today? The public service is full of people who genuinely want to do good work, and we need to enable them to do it. This mean takes taking a long hard look at how the government functions and where it doesn't and taking steps to remove any barriers that don't support the goal of service. We need to move towards a client service model that enables continued improvement.

My final priority is that we need to have fundamental discussions about how we grow and mature our consensus government. The GNWT has often been criticized for many years for being the party at the table holding up negotiations. I think we can be clearer at those tables and in all actions if we recognize that our role should be to direct and support a public government that operates alongside Indigenous governments in the spirit of partnership and humility, not opposition. That means high grading the conversation on northern governance.

We need to talk about how we can make collaborative decisions that all residents can trust. For me, that looks like finding a better way forward together. One option could be a bicameral legislature with an Indigenous senate. But I'm one person, and it needs to be a full conversation between all partners.

Further, land back is a conversation we need to be having every day for the next four years. To really confront what that looks like here in the North, what that means with the lens of reconciliation, what that looks like if we are honest about decolonization of a colonial structure that we are upholding as Members of the 20th Assembly. How do we start in that heart and head space to develop trust and earn respect as a partner in governing with Indigenous peoples of this territory?

These are my priorities that I most want to discuss and find a way forward on in the next four years and more if given the chance with all of you. Thank you.

Thank you,

Kate Reid

MLA Great Slave, Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly