



Commissioner's Address

*At the Opening of the Third Session of the
Second Legislative Assembly of Nunavut*

Delivered by:

**THE HONOURABLE ANN MEEKITJUK HANSON
COMMISSIONER OF NUNAVUT**

November 15, 2005

Tungasugitsi Innait, Uqaqtisisiji, Sivuliqti, Maligaliuqtiit ammalu Nunavutmiut.

Upigusuktunga sivulliqpaami kiggatutunga Kamisanauniqmik, maligaliutiit gavamavut katimagiaqniaqimmata sivunittinni atuqniatattinik aulatsiarunnaqullugit.

I am honoured to serve Nunavummiut and it is with great pride that I deliver the Commissioner's Address for the Third Session of the Second Legislative Assembly Nunavut

Before and since being appointed on April 21, 2005 as the third Commissioner of Nunavut, I have travelled throughout our territory and have been struck by both the optimism *and* the realism of Nunavummiut

There is an optimism about Nunavut, about who we are as Nunavummiut living in Canada's newest territory. We are justifiably proud of what we have achieved.

There is also a realism, based on the fact that much more needs to be done before Nunavut can take its full and rightful place in our Canadian federation and before Nunavummiut have a standard of living, services and opportunities that most other Canadians take for granted.

When it comes to closing this gap, the government is both optimistic and realistic about the outcome of the First Ministers' and national Aboriginal leaders meeting in Kelowna on November 25.

The upcoming meeting will consider new initiatives for Aboriginal peoples in key areas of health, education, housing and economic development – all areas where many of the Inuit of Nunavut live with the reality that we have some way to go.

We welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to begin closing the gap that exists between aboriginal peoples and other Canadians

The strength, determination, independence and creativity of our people made Nunavut a reality. It is these attributes that will carry us into the future.

Today Nunavummiut are building their territory while preserving a unique culture, language and connections to the land.

Having spent the first 11 years of my life living in Qakutut and Kimmirut and speaking only Inuktitut I am particularly aware of the relevance of our culture, language and our connection to the land.

As Members of this Assembly you reflect Nunavummiut -- and their aspirations and hopes.

In meeting your objectives as representatives of Nunavummiut I know you are committed to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit guiding principles such as Aajiiqatigiinniq (decision-making through discussion and consensus.)

These principles are outlined in *Pinasuaqtavut 2004-2009*, the government's guide that you helped create for its second mandate. The goals and objectives guide your efforts to not only strengthen our public government and emerging economy, but to ensure that Inuit benefit as a result.

We respect the accumulated wisdom of our elders and they help us combine traditional ways with modern knowledge.

Elders provide an inspirational and cultural link from one generation to the next and the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth is proposing to strengthen that link. It will implement a pilot project in two Nunavut communities.

This project is geared towards strengthening the role of elders in the community wellness process and addressing social wellness issues based on Inuit societal values.

A public government, however, faces many issues within a wider context. For example, we need to solve the deficits that we have in housing, infrastructure and training.

For this a government needs skills. And it needs funding.

However, budget restraints are one of the most urgent issues facing the GN today. The fiscal situation facing the territory is serious and cannot be ignored.

In the spirit of Qanuqturniq (being innovative and resourceful) the government is seeking new ways to develop integrated approaches to public services. We need to avoid duplication and optimize available resources.

During this sitting of the Legislature you will be asked to make decisions about expenditures on building and infrastructure projects.

The government is working hard to ensure that Nunavummiut benefit as much as possible from this spending. For example, it is devising approaches that will result in project schedules being set so that training, hiring and sub-contract opportunities can be maximized

Four money bills will be tabled for your consideration during this sitting.

They are the Appropriation (Capital) Act, 2006-2007, to authorize the Government of Nunavut to make capital expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007.

You will also receive the Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act, No. 2, 2005-2006, to authorize the Government of Nunavut to make additional capital expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

In addition, you will be asked to consider the Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 2, 2005-2006, to authorize the Government of Nunavut to make additional operations and maintenance expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Finally, there will be the Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 4, 2004-05. The purpose of this bill is to provide additional appropriations resulting from the impact of year-end accounting adjustments

These bills are being introduced at a time when the world price for crude oil is 50 per cent higher than the year before. This year, Nunavut paid about \$30 million more for fuel than it did last year.

In contrast, federal transfers under the territorial formula financing arrangement will grow annually by only 3.5 per cent. This will require us as a territory to restrain expenditures to ensure that we live within our means.

The Government of Nunavut is making its case to the federal government for a fiscal framework that recognizes the needs of Nunavummiut and the unique environment we live in.

Nunavut requires a territorial financing arrangement that ensures our annual grant will grow at a rate that not only allows the territorial government to deliver programs and services comparable to other jurisdictions in Canada, but ensures that the territory can take advantage of future economic development opportunities.

Nunavummiut are eager to become more self-reliant and make a greater contribution to the rest of Canada.

This is why Nunavut is seeking a devolution agreement. In that agreement Nunavut will be seeking a revenue sharing arrangement that is comparable to the resource sharing arrangements recently achieved by the Maritime Provinces.

Devolution for Nunavut will be part of a historical process of nation-building for Canada and empowerment for Nunavummiut, especially the Inuit majority.

Our approach to devolution will be based on the premise that Nunavummiut should be the principal beneficiaries of Nunavut's natural resources.

We will ensure that terms for that transfer do not adversely affect Nunavut's formula financing arrangement. In other words, there has to be a real net fiscal benefit for Nunavut, otherwise devolution will not make sense.

Nunavut is a part of Canada that is rich in natural resources, including gold and diamonds, as well as large reserves of as-yet-untapped oil and gas.

Our territory is being seen as an increasingly attractive location for mineral investment. Investment in mineral exploration and development is expected to exceed \$150 million in Nunavut for the second straight year. Our goal will be to maximize the economic benefit of that investment for all Nunavummiut.

The first mine in the new era of mining in our territory is presently under construction. The Jericho Diamond mine is expected to begin official production of Nunavut diamonds this coming March.

The territory's relationship with the federal government is as complex as it is important. Part of that relationship includes the implementation of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*.

The Government of Nunavut is committed to meeting all its obligations under the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, but it cannot do so in isolation.

That is why government is focusing a considerable amount of energy to reach an agreement with the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs for an implementation contract for the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*.

On May 26, 2005 former Supreme Court of B.C. Justice Thomas Berger was appointed as conciliator for the implementation contract negotiations.

The territorial government looks forward to his final report and his advice on how to resolve outstanding issues.

The lack of an implementation contract has adversely affected Inuit training, institutions of public government and Inuit organizations.

The government is also looking forward to concluding the Northern Strategy.

When it was announced almost a year ago the federal government agreed to invest \$40 million in Nunavut over three years.

The government has proposed the following approach to investing the Northern Strategy Trust funds: \$20 million is to be spent on developing and expanding our economy and \$20 million is to be invested on initiatives building a stronger cultural foundation. These are the two priorities agreed on at the Full Caucus meeting in Arviat and are set out in our mandate - *Pinasuaqtavut*.

For developing and expanding our economy, \$5 million is to be invested in community economic development with an emphasis on supporting non-decentralized communities.

The strength of non-decentralized communities is critical to our growth, sustainability and lifestyle. The government understands that some communities of the territory have not shared equally in our growth and prosperity. In response, it will continue to support and emphasize economic development in non-decentralized communities.

In addition, \$5 million is to be spent promoting environmental stewardship and protection with an emphasis on those initiatives that also contribute to the economy.

And finally, the government is proposing to invest \$10 million in a new trades training school.

Of the \$20 million for culture, \$10 million is to be invested in a cultural school and \$10 million is to be set aside for a heritage centre.

In the near future, Nunavut will enter into a trust agreement with Canada in order to access the Northern Strategy funds over a three year period.

Nunavut's focus is squarely on expanding our economy.

Building a competitive economy driven by private sector development in our targeted strategic sectors is a priority of this government.

The government wants to boost our economy by modernizing the regulatory process in a manner that is consistent with the priorities set out in the Nunavut Economic Development Strategy and *Pinasuaqtavut*.

The government will remove unnecessary regulations that impede business development. It is seeking input from the business community, Inuit organizations and other stakeholders to find the right balance between the public interest and business interests.

Poor access to capital is well documented as a hurdle for businesses in many jurisdictions, and Nunavut is no different. The government is addressing this specifically with the introduction during this fiscal year of the Strategic Investments Program.

The Government of Nunavut will invest \$4 million under this program. This funding will support implementation of the Nunavut Economic Development Strategy.

The Strategic Investments Program has three different program streams:

- Support for private sector strategic economic infrastructure,
- Knowledge and innovation, and
- Strategic projects.

Projects worth \$3.6 million were approved in early October and the Department of Economic Development and Transportation will enter into contribution agreements with the successful applicants.

The Strategic Investments Program will also be available during the next fiscal year and a call for the submission of proposals will be made in February 2006.

This program will help businesses to grow, diversify and prosper. Additionally, it will aid in the strong role and success that entrepreneurs play in many sectors of our developing economy.

An important element for economic expansion is education. We want future generations to be able to benefit fully from our expanding economy.

The Department of Education has begun a fundamental shift in the way education is delivered across Nunavut. This includes K-12, post-secondary, career counseling and new strategies to develop an emerging workforce.

A change to the school funding formula has increased the amount of money going to our schools and increased the number of positions, for both teachers and support staff.

The Department of Education is committed to work with District Education Authorities and school staff to maximize our commitment to changing how Nunavut schools are funded.

New school construction or major renovation to our schools will encompass dedicated daycare space, which will open up more daycare across Nunavut.

With more than a 30 per cent increase in our graduates this past spring we should celebrate the increase in the number of Grade 12 graduates over the past few years.

Our optimism for the future is justified by the success of our young graduates. Success will lead to even more success. That is why we need to continue looking at more ways to provide meaningful and appropriate opportunities for our children to succeed in school.

The working draft of the Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy will be tabled during this sitting.

It suggests approaches to address the educational and training needs of youth and adults in Nunavut. It brings to the forefront not only the challenges we face, but provides thoughtful and prudent ways for attaining them. We encourage the public and those interested to provide comments and input.

The Department of Education, in partnership with Nunavut Arctic College and Inuit organizations, is proposing an intensive teacher recruitment and training strategy for Nunavut. This effort will concentrate on recruiting Inuktitut-speaking teachers.

In a potential labour market brimming with opportunity in the next decades, in areas such as mining, fishing, tourism and construction, we must prepare our youth for these employment opportunities.

In a wider sense, Nunavut education is more than being taught work-related skills. It is also about the enhancement of Inuit languages as living, working languages of choice in all spheres of life in Nunavut.

Culture and language of instruction are issues being raised in the consultations for the new Education Act. These consultations will be completed in the coming months.

Education and training are also one of the key components of the Department of Health and Social Services' Closer to Home strategy, which will create a reformed health and social services system.

Learning closer to home is a key component of the strategy and will provide the next generation of health care providers. This will help us avoid a shortage of doctors, nurses and other health care providers. Shortages of health care professionals are already evident in Canada and abroad.

Nunavut's health system currently relies on the south for staff and services. Professionals from southern Canada move here and provide us with good service. But only a few choose to stay and make Nunavut their home.

Nunavut's goal of healthy communities demands that we equip Inuit to become the health care providers for the next generation at all levels of the system.

An ambitious Health Human Resources Strategy will help the government make significant progress over the next five years.

As we graduate Inuit nurses, mental health workers and other health care specialists in the coming years, Nunavummiut will benefit in many ways. We will receive care from people who understand our language and culture. And we will receive continuity of care from a team of community-based professionals.

From health care, to the public service, to technical jobs, we need more training and education.

Education is important within Nunavut. It is also important to look outside our territory because we have a pivotal role to play in educating Canadians and others about what we as a people are learning about and experiencing with climate change.

Nunavut has a unique opportunity to raise global awareness about how the effects of climate change are altering our socio-economical, traditional and cultural ways of life in the Arctic.

That is why Nunavut will be represented at the *11th Annual United Nations Climate Change Conference* in Montréal from November 28 to December 9, 2005. It will be the first meeting of the signatories to the Kyoto Protocol, which came into effect in February 2005, and discussions will take place on long-term measures to address climate change on a global scale.

These discussions are significant for Nunavut as decisions made during this time will have an impact on the lives of Nunavummiut for years to come.

During this session, the government is going to be tabling legislative amendments for your consideration. These are changes to legislation that we inherited from the Northwest Territories and will result in laws that better meet the needs of Nunavummiut and more accurately reflect practices in Nunavut.

Proposed amendments to the *Liquor Act* will regularize current practices regarding the importation of liquor and the purchase of liquor from government liquor warehouses.

Amendments to the *Financial Administration Act* and *Conflict of Interest Act* will also be tabled. They are intended to strengthen the accountability and management of Nunavut's public agencies.

An Act to amend the *Fire Protection Act* will also be put before you for your consideration.

Our justice system is also adapting to meet the needs of Nunavummiut. We are now seeing the results of changes we have made. It has become a system that more readily incorporates Inuit societal values.

The Department of Justice is shifting its focus more towards community-based healing initiatives and victim services. There has been an expansion in healing for victims, offenders, and their communities.

The number of outpost camps that provide justice healing services in Nunavut communities has increased and the Kugluktuk Ilavut Centre has opened. All have community-based healing programs.

The Department of Justice is continuing consultations on proposed family abuse prevention legislation with the hope that the legislation will reflect and enable traditional healing methods. The legislation will also focus on providing safety for victims so that they can pursue healing in their community. It has the potential to provide greater stability for families and in particular for children, who so often are the innocent victims of domestic violence in their homes.

By building a criminal justice system that responds to the needs of Nunavummiut, more matters will be referred to community justice committees, where the communities can use

Inuit Qaujimatugangit by increasing their involvement in dispute resolution. The goal of this is to heal broken relationships and restore individuals' roles in their community.

In my address I have touched on only some of the successes and on some of the challenges that we face. More needs to be done.

As we move forward we will continue to work with our land claims partners so that we can continue to achieve the objectives and goals in *Pinasuaqtavut 2004-2009*, which is your plan and your government's plan for improving the lives of all Nunavummiut.

The path is clear and I wish you continuing success -- Nakurmiik.