



Commissioner's Address

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

Delivered by:

**THE HONOURABLE NELLIE KUSUGAK
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF NUNAVUT**

June 2, 2015

Elders, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislature, and honoured guests, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the opening of the third session of the fourth Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.

It is an honour to be here before you to serve Nunavummiut and deliver the second Commissioner's address of this Assembly to highlight our achievements and progress thus far.

We continue to reinforce the successes of previous Assemblies and move forward with confidence in undertaking our mandate, Sivumut Abluqta.

Nunavut is a land like no other. Our government is building awareness and understanding of Nunavut's priorities among a variety of audiences at the national and international level. We are taking advantage of significant opportunities to promote the value of public and private partnership in developing our territory.

In its leadership, the government has remained committed to making education, economic development, and training and employment a priority. We are showing Canadians that Nunavut is a contributor to economies in Southern Canada.

We have strengthened our relationships with federal and territorial stakeholders, key decision makers and business leaders.

Bilaterally, northern premiers renewed their commitment to the *Northern Vision* that fosters a vibrant region with healthy communities, sound economies and diverse opportunities where the environment is protected for future generations.

Nunavut has also played host to significant high profile forums, such as the Arctic Economic Council, Western Premiers' Forum, the Circumpolar Mental Wellness Symposium, and the Ministerial meeting of Arctic Council members. Through these opportunities we are bringing attention to Nunavut and its role within Canada. We are actively participating in, and contributing to, dialogue that shapes our destiny.

On June 15 and 16, our Premier is hosting the Northern Premiers' Forum in Kugluktuk, where discussions will focus on market access to infrastructure and energy, and follow-up on pan-territorial issues around mine training, science and climate change.

Through our leadership, we have had a number of engagements with the Prime Minister of Canada and spoke directly about our need for increased infrastructure and responsible economic development. In addition to projects like the Canadian High Arctic Research Station, we are optimistic that there still remains room for infrastructure projects that benefit growth in Nunavut.

The government has been a key partner with Parks Canada in the search for the lost Franklin ships of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, which resulted in the discovery of the HMS Erebus last year.

This discovery was a direct result of Inuit traditional knowledge and findings made on-land by our archeological division. We believe there is room to strengthen the partnership with Canada and further demonstrate our legitimate interest in managing our own archaeological heritage.

We are looking forward to working with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated to address increased training opportunities for our beneficiaries within the public service, as a result of the settlement with Canada. In the coming weeks, we are taking part in discussions to move this forward.

With respect to Sivumut Abluqta, we have made significant progress in addressing the mandate in all areas.

We are following through on our commitment to prioritize education and continue to focus on literacy through the development of the balanced literacy initiative, which is a framework to support focused and improved literacy instruction in our schools.

We are now working with established and respected institutions and professionals in education to develop leveled reading books in Inuktitut. These books are written at different levels for the emergent

reader to more complex books for advanced readers. As well, we are developing a set of benchmarks assessments to support the implementation of balanced literacy.

There has been positive progress during the first phase of exploring Roman Orthography as a standard guideline for teaching Inuktitut within our school system. We are looking to begin consultations on this initiative during 2015.

We are working with District Education Authorities, and external partners, such as Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami to implement an engagement strategy that specifically targets communities, parents and families in being more actively involved in student success. The value of this relationship is well documented, and has been proven to impart a positive effect on attendance and to the success of students, teachers and schools.

Having placed emphasis on kindergarten to grade 12, we also understand the value of post-secondary learning. There is an extensive array of statistics that underpin the importance of widening access to post-secondary education in Canada. It remains evident there is a direct correlation among relationships between employment, higher earnings and higher education.

We are pleased to announce the government is initiating a feasibility study to determine the foundation of a university located in Nunavut.

The purpose is to enable access to higher education at home that represents our diverse land.

To further this commitment to higher education, we are entering into a multi-stakeholder partnership to nurture a professional education solution that embodies principals within our Inuit societal values. It is with pleasure that we announce that by 2017, we will establish a law degree-granting program. This process is to be initiated through Nunavut Arctic College with the support of the Department of Justice.

We have not forgotten about vocational and skills training. Interdepartmentally, we are working with external agencies to conduct a comprehensive scan of apprenticeship opportunities and barriers. The aim is to determine the current status of apprenticeship trades and occupations from a career development perspective and how to effectively move forward in better addressing their needs.

The government is in the process of updating the *Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupations Certification Regulations* to shorten the waiting for re-examination and further to increase the ratio for journeymen to take additional apprentices.

By the end of this year, income assistance clients will now automatically be referred to a career development officer to support their transition to the workforce through training and eventual employment.

Where possible, we are also implementing initiatives to increase labour force training by engaging with stakeholders, such as the Iqaluit airport construction project to increase labour force training and employment for Nunavummiut.

Within the public service, you have learned that we are moving aggressively forward with the delivery of our leadership development program. It focuses on emerging managers and senior managers, with particular emphasis on supervisors to enhance their skills. By September, we begin our first intake and orientation.

We continue to support training and development to enhance Inuit employment in the Public Service and are actively working cross departmentally to ensure success.

We know education is a direct driver of poverty reduction, but action must also take place to fix gaps in social assistance. Presently, we are finalizing the parameters for the review of our social assistance program. We begin to engage the public this Fall, launching a full review of income assistance at the upcoming poverty reduction roundtable.

We recognize there is also a need to develop elements that support children, seniors and Nunavummiut in need of care. Within this mandate, we are going to make changes to the senior fuel subsidy program, day care subsidy, explore the exemption of the National

Child Benefit Supplement from Income Support eligibility calculations, and develop a long-term care strategy.

Our communities must be healthy and equipped to grow along with us, and the mental and social wellbeing of all Nunavummiut remains a long-term priority.

Mental wellness, addictions and domestic violence continue to challenge our territory. We are committed to providing resources for community-based solutions that help our families and individuals find the care and supports they need for healing. We are moving to repurpose infrastructure in Rankin Inlet into a residential mental health facility, and by early 2016, provide training for more beneficiaries in the area of addiction treatment.

We are working with our partners to renew and strengthen our efforts towards suicide prevention, increase collaboration and reduce the rate of suicide. By the time we resume Session after the summer break, we intend to table the Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy evaluation report. We intend to use the evaluation findings to inform the development of an improved action plan to better address our needs.

It takes more than government to address these issues, and we need the involvement of multi-stakeholders to ensure a healthy wellbeing for all.

We acknowledge the family violence program in Nunavut is both under-resourced and under-developed. We are looking at putting forward new resources in the budget to shrink this gap.

In this manner, this year, we are undertaking to review the Saillivik policy for funding family violence shelters to enhance safe shelters.

Enabling healthy communities, means we must remain vigilant in empowering communities to create solutions.

A big part of a healthy community is derived from having access to supports in addition to wellness. To that end, this coming year, we are expanding our relationships with non-governmental organizations and community based groups, and engaging business partners and the Nutrition North Advisory Board in food security efforts that support the work of the Food Security Coalition.

We have committed to undertake a food price survey annually to establish a baseline for data collection, and to determine trends and barriers that contribute to access of nutritious foods. The data collected from the survey will serve to inform our policies and programs. We will also work to ensure those who are most vulnerable to food insecurity are able to access country food.

While there is a strong emphasis by this government to advocate and provide more access to nutritional foods in our communities through programs such as breakfast programs in schools, we must also

provide a healthy balance between offering better access to country foods and preservation of our wildlife for the generations to come.

We are in the midst of reviewing the findings and recommendations for improvement to our harvester support program, as well as completing updates to the country food access program.

To maintain our balance of hunting and wildlife, we are looking to launch a hunter education program, with particular focus on sustainable harvesting skills. We are collaborating with other jurisdictions on best practices and want to ensure that any program of the sort is relevant to Nunavummiut.

While we continue to promote conservation of our wildlife, we must also meld conservation philosophies within the confines of modern society, such as conservation of our environment through infrastructure that is energy efficient.

To that end, next year, we are launching a pilot project to test solar power on a new building being constructed in the summer of 2016. The analysis of this test project enables us to use the results to identify opportunities to incorporate changes to future designs and update our approaches for the maintenance of our existing housing stock.

The Blueprint for Action on Housing is entering the consultation stage and is set to conclude in the winter session with the tabling of the final

report next spring. We are examining ways to expand our portfolio of owned housing assets to determine where existing assets can support continuum of care through the Blueprint for Action consultations.

As the potential for infrastructure grows along with our economy, we are identifying ways to increase our effectiveness and transparency in the participation of major resource reviews through the Nunavut Impact Review Board. Our participation is going to be strengthened during this mandate by the rollout of a socio-economic assessment guide and comprehensive community engagement policy and guide for practitioners and reviewers of major development projects in Nunavut.

We continue to engage and collaborate with industry for cooperation and support on regional wildlife monitoring efforts. By September 2015, following additional consultations, we will be in a position to submit the Baffin Island Caribou Management Plan to the Wildlife Management Board for their consideration. We are also looking to implement recommendations from the harvester support review, and continue the enhanced training program for our conservation officers.

We have approved new wildlife regulations and expect the rollout to begin on July 1, 2015.

In addition to balancing conservation with economic and infrastructure activity, we are determined to boost the tourism, and

arts and crafts sectors through various means.

We are introducing legislation to amend the *Travel and Tourism Act* to bring it more in-line with Nunavut's reality and implement amendments that are flexible enough to enable growth in this sector.

As Nunavut's population continues to grow and we experience an influx of people coming to Nunavut, we must emphasize road safety, and ensure our legislation is consistent with that of other jurisdictions where harmonization is required. We intend to meet the intent of national transportation agreements that Nunavut has signed. Through this lens, we seek to amend the *Motor Vehicles Act*, which will include measures to curb distracted driving and reconstitute the *Motor Vehicle Act* into a broader *Traffic Safety Act*.

We are putting measures in place to address other acts that are not reflective of updated public health practices. Therefore, we are introducing a *Public Health Act* that takes into account elements at the national and international level and one that echoes the unique position of Nunavut. As well, we are actively working to amend the *Mental Health Act*, so that it too is more reflective of our reality.

The government is introducing a bill for a *Consumer Protection Act*, that aims to protect consumers and provide rules and regulations that relate to the buying and selling goods and services and establishing a fee for cashing cheques outside of financial institutions.

As well, we are introducing a Bill to amend the *Safety Act*. This Bill would allow for - Workplace Hazardous Material Information System to be harmonized with federal legislation.

We are considering options for increased transparency around lobbying. Adding mechanisms to deal with lobby groups or individuals is part of our efforts to increase government efficiency, transparency and effectiveness. This work compliments what we are already doing with respect to the program review that is well underway and our audit of our grants and contribution agreements.

Through Sivumut Abluqta, the government has adopted a vision, goals and priorities for creating a strong and prosperous Nunavut where all residents are able to pursue opportunities in their communities and regions and achieve their personal aspirations and potential.

Sustainable and responsible development of our natural resources leading to balanced economic growth and our integral focus on training and education is most important in making our vision a reality and improving our social wellbeing. We are pursuing ways to generate more awareness of our strengths, which has been proven by our fiscal management and increase to our borrowing limit.

We have enormous potential and we must continue to cultivate partnerships to pursue opportunities in the territory and move forward in common areas of concern with our arctic neighbours.

Finding common ground among many groups with diverse agendas and governing by consensus is the mainstay of the government. We continue to lead in the balance between traditional and scientific knowledge in service delivery, policy and programming.

This coming Nunavut Day we mark the return of the snow-block carving to Nunavut by Mr. Thomas Siddon, former Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated presented him with the carving because of his ministerial achievements, which led the 1992 agreement to create the territory of Nunavut. He is graciously gifting the carving back in honour of Nunavut, and it will be housed in the Legislative Assembly until such time as a heritage facility exists in Nunavut.

As we move to grow our future, we have not forgotten about our past. Culture and Heritage has been working closely with several partners towards the development of a Nunavut Heritage Centre that would hold our historical records, archaeology and museum objects and allow for space for new acquisitions, such as the snow-block carving and perhaps even objects from the Franklin Expeditions.

We are actively working with the heritage society and external partners to raise funds and establish new partnerships in the anticipation of the opening of a heritage facility by 2021.

The potential of our people and our territory is boundless. By stepping forward together with strong resolve, we can secure a better future for us all.

A tremendous amount of work and progress has occurred during the first and second sessions of the 4th Assembly. Members of this House have been instrumental in facilitating the discussions, goals and successes thus far.

We recognize we must continue in our efforts to reach our goals and achieve tangible results for all Nunavummiut in the upcoming session by the end of our mandate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their hard work and contribution. I wish you all a restful and refreshing spring and summer season with your families and communities.

Maatna.