

The Honourable Robert R. McLeod Remarks
Mineral Exploration Roundup Reception Jan. 18

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, I'd like to thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to attend this reception, which is being held at a facility we are very excited about – Canada's Northern House.

I'd like to acknowledge a couple of parties before I get too far into my remarks. I'd like to extend a big thank you to Lawson Lundell for sponsoring this reception. I'd also like to acknowledge Mr. John Kearney, President of the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, as the Chamber is co-hosting this reception with us. Mr. Kearney, I'm pleased we have been able to partner on this event with the Chamber.

The kind of cooperation and consultation that occurred in making this reception happen bodes well for the future relationship between the GNWT and the Chamber. And we'll need more of both in the future to make the Northwest Territories the mining destination we think it can become.

It is interesting that the theme of the 2010 Mineral Exploration Roundup is "Go for the Gold and Everything Else." It is interesting because "Everything" is a word I think describes the mineral resources we have in the territory.

Yes, we have gold – but we also have diamonds, lead, zinc, silver, uranium, copper, tungsten, rare earths and platinum. However, the challenge in 2009 was attracting investment to our territory – the kind of investment that eventually turns potential into producing mines. Due to the economic downturn, exploration and deposit appraisal expenditures in the Northwest Territories were just \$28 million in 2009.

But the opportunities are there, ladies and gentlemen – as evidenced by the record \$193.1 million spent on exploration and deposit appraisals in 2007 – and the GNWT welcomes responsible mining development.

As the economy improves, we anticipate development to pick up again. That is why this government will continue to work on making the Northwest Territories a mining destination of choice. We are doing it by continuing to work with the federal government on funding territorial geoscience priority projects under the SINED initiative.

We are doing it with our involvement in the NWT Mine Training Society, as we work towards training more Aboriginal people and northerners for jobs in the mining industry.

We are doing it with our ongoing efforts to lobby the federal government to build much needed infrastructure in the Northwest Territories – the kind of infrastructure that will resolve accessibility issues for the industry and bring down the cost of doing business.

For example, the proposed Talston Hydro Expansion project has the potential to displace 100,000 litres of imported diesel fuel and 300,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually. The project is currently in the economic review phase, but if approved and built, it would provide clean, affordable power to new and existing mines in the region, provide valuable economic opportunities for our residents and serve to diversify our economy

Finally, we are working on making the Northwest Territories a mining destination of choice with our commitment towards pushing the federal government to address the issues that are impacting the effectiveness of our regulatory regime.

Ladies and gentlemen, mining has a long history in the Northwest Territories. But history is just that – history. It is the past and it is gone.

What we need to do now is ensure there is a sustainable mining future for the Northwest Territories. The Government of the Northwest Territories believes it is important to achieve a balance where we have responsible development, Northwest Territories residents benefiting from that development and a prosperous industry. I hope what I've said here tonight has shown you our government is committed to working with the mining industry to make that happen.

Thank you and enjoy the rest of the reception.