



October 3, 2008

The Honourable Floyd K. Roland  
Premier of the Northwest Territories  
P.O. Box 1320  
YELLOWKNIFE, NT X1A 2L9

Dear Premier Roland:

Prime Minister Harper has asked that I respond to your letter of September 16, 2008 requesting our party's position on key issues affecting the Northwest Territories. First, on behalf of the Prime Minister I want to thank you for raising these important northern issues. I have also included responses to the questions you posed in your September 24<sup>th</sup> letter to me. I hope to work closely with your government to deal with these issues as a member of a re-elected Conservative Government following the October 14<sup>th</sup> election.

As you rightly point out in your letter, our actions today will have profound implications for future generations. That is why our Government supports a vision of a new North that realizes its full social and economic potential and secures its future, for the benefit of all Canadians. Our Northern Strategy supports this vision by focusing on four integrated priorities: economic and social development, governance, environmental protection, and sovereignty.

In response to the questions posed in your letter, I would like to offer our views as follows:

**1. Do you and your party support the Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline project and how will you enable the project to proceed in a timely manner?**

Our Government fully supports the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline project moving forward, subject to the completion of a thorough environmental assessment, a regulatory review and an appropriate economic framework.

This is why our Government committed to provide \$500 million in funding in Budget 2006, to establish the Mackenzie Gas Project Impact Fund. This fund is intended to support regional projects that help to alleviate the socio-economic impact on Northwest Territories communities affected by the proposed project.

It is also why our Government has consistently supported the participation of Aboriginal people as equity partners in this project through the Aboriginal Pipeline Group.

**2. Furthermore, how will you and your party ensure Northerners participate fully in opportunities for employment, training, and business involvement resulting from NWT resource development?**

A critical element of our northern vision is to ensure that northerners benefit from the development of their resources. A strong north is partially defined by strong, economically sustainable communities.

Our Government has committed \$105 million over 5 years to more than double the size of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership Initiative which is an important initiative for the North providing people with access to training to take jobs in the oil and gas and mining industries.

As well, last month the Prime Minister made an important commitment to establish a new stand-alone regional development agency for Northern Canada, bringing together existing northern development activities into one agency with one focused vision for the economic future of the North: a prosperous future for those who call the North home.

**3. What steps will your party take to make investments in critical infrastructure in the NWT a reality?**

It is clear that our Government is committed to ensuring the NWT has funding to address critical infrastructure requirements. As part of the Building Canada Plan, Canada and the Northwest Territories signed a \$245 million infrastructure agreement last year. This agreement will result in significant infrastructure initiatives to strengthen the territory's economy and communities.

As part of this agreement, the GNWT and our government signed the territorial base funding agreement. Under this agreement, the Northwest Territories will receive more than \$25 million annually from the Government of Canada, for a total of \$185.8 million through to 2014. These funds will be used to support core infrastructure priorities such as the Kakisa River Bridge Replacement, as well as community priorities such as water and wastewater treatment facilities.

All communities across the Northwest Territories will also benefit from the \$88.5 million from the Gas Tax Fund between 2007 and 2014.

**4. What are you and your party intending to do in the support of the construction of a Mackenzie Valley Highway?**

Our Government is committed to working with other governments, including the Government of the Northwest Territories, in support of infrastructure projects in the North. We understand that highways to remote regions help bring a more diversified economy to communities, lower the cost of goods and services and promote economic development, including new tourism opportunities. As a first step, we were pleased that significant new funding was provided under the Building Canada Plan to begin work on the road south from Tuktoyaktuk.

**5. What are you and your party willing to do in support of developing the NWT's huge hydro potential?**

The Northwest Territories has tremendous undeveloped hydroelectric generation potential. I believe the development of this cleaner, greener energy holds great promise for our residents, for small businesses and for industries across our territory. The strategic development of the North's hydro resources is integral to the development of the North. As well, we can make substantial reductions in our own greenhouse gas emissions through the displacement of imported diesel fuel for industrial developments and communities.

As MP, I would be committed to working with your government and northern stakeholders to move forward with these important projects to realize the north's vast hydro potential.

**6. Given the long-term nature of hydro-electric development, in the short to medium term, what is your party intending to do to advance the development of alternative energy sources, such as wind, biomass, and geothermal?**

In January 2007, the Conservative government launched its ecoENERGY Initiatives. This consists of three components:

- the ecoENERGY Technology Initiative - a targeted investment of \$230 million to support the development of next-generation clean energy technologies;
- the ecoENERGY Efficiency Initiative - a \$300 million investment over four years to promote smarter energy use and reduce harmful emissions that affect the health of Canadians;
- the ecoENERGY Renewable Initiative – a \$1.5 billion to boost Canada's supply of clean electricity from renewable sources like wind, biomass, small hydro and ocean energy.

In addition to the ecoENERGY initiatives above, the ecoENERGY for Aboriginal and Northern Communities Program will provide \$15 million in new funding over four years to support Aboriginal and Northern communities working on clean energy projects, including remote communities that rely on diesel power generation. The program will focus on three key areas to address climate change challenges facing Northern and Aboriginal communities: community energy planning and management; renewable energy and energy efficiency projects; and, capacity building, training and tools.

**7. What concrete steps will you and your party take to help to mitigate the high cost of living in the NWT?**

Our Government believes in cutting taxes and lowering the cost of living for all, including the cost of living for Northerners. Since taking office we have increased the daily Northern Residents Tax Deduction by 10 per cent; reduced the GST from 7 to 5 per cent; provided a \$100 per month Child Care Benefit for every child under the age of six; reduced the lowest personal income tax rate; raised the personal income tax threshold to \$9,600; and provided targeted tax cuts for apprentices' tools and children's fitness.

A re-elected Conservative government will continue to lower taxes by implementing modest and affordable initiatives to help Canadian families. This includes cutting the excise tax on diesel and aviation fuel which will lower fuel costs for all forms of transportation - including air travel and personal vehicles; and lowering transportation costs for everything we buy - including groceries, clothes, home heating fuel and gasoline.

Our government will further raise the personal income tax threshold to \$10,100 in 2009; we will provide a tax credit for up to \$5000 of the closing costs on the purchase of a new home for first-time homebuyers; we will increase the Senior Age Credit Amount by an additional \$1000, on top of already planned increases; and we will introduce important financial changes to benefit families that care for family members with disabilities.

**8. How will you and your party help to address the critical shortage of social and affordable housing in the NWT?**

In Budget 2006, our Government provided a \$300 million transfer to the territories over three years towards the Northern Housing Trust to help meet pressures with regard to the supply of affordable housing in the North. The GNWT received \$50 million of the \$300 million. This Trust supports investments to increase the supply of affordable housing, including rental, transitional and supportive housing in the territories.

Aboriginal people in the North can also access funding through the Affordable Housing Initiative, as well as housing renovation programs offered through CMHC.

**9. How will you and your party ensure that the GNWT has the ability to develop the Northern economy for the future of Northern residents and Canadians through a finalized devolution agreement?**

As Conservatives, we fundamentally believe that land and resource management should be the responsibility of those affected most by development. Our Government remains committed to a fair and equitable Devolution Agreement for the Northwest Territories. One of the four pillars of our Northern Strategy is to provide Northerners with more control over their own economic and political destiny.

Working with northern governments to conclude a final deal to ensure the NWT has more financial resources and greater control of Northern lands to better create economic development opportunities for Northerners will be a priority for me as MP.

**10. What will you and your party do to ensure that Canada meets its obligations under existing land, resource and self-government agreements in the NWT?**

Our Government will continue to work with the GNWT and with Aboriginal governments to implement current Aboriginal Rights agreements. An important part of this work is ensuring the necessary resources are in place to meet our obligations and we will do this in an expeditious manner.

Great progress has been made in the NWT on Aboriginal Rights agreements, as evidenced by the handshake agreement recently concluded in Deline and the Agreement-in-Principle signed with the Acho Dene Koe of Fort Liard.

**11. What will you and your party do to ensure that emerging self-governments will have the necessary resources to fully implement their self-government agreements?**

As noted in the previous answer, we have made great progress in working to resolve Aboriginal Rights agreements across the territory. At the same time, we are committed to working closely with your government to provide emerging self-governments with the necessary capacity to fully implement these agreements.

**12. What measures will you and your party put in place to assist the Northwest Territories in dealing with the effects of climate change?**

Canadians and Northerners want action on the environment; action that reduces green house gases while preserving our standard of living and way of life. Our government is turning the corner with a practical, achievable plan to clean up this country's air, land and water and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our Government introduced a plan to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent by 2020 and cut air pollution in half by 2015. Our Government also created a \$2 billion dollar eco-Energy initiative to promote smarter energy use and a greater use of clean energy sources.

**13. What will you and your party do to ensure the continuation of key federal investments in important programs such as the territorial Health Access Fund, the Northwest Housing Trusts, and the Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development Fund?**

Our party remains committed to investing in new and existing programs that help address the challenges facing the North. I am particularly pleased to reiterate the commitment of the Prime Minister to establish a new stand-alone regional development agency to cover Northern Canada. This is a commitment I long sought from the federal government during my time as the Minister responsible for Economic Development for the GNWT.

This agency would consolidate existing northern development activities from Indian and Northern Affairs and other federal departments into one agency giving the North its own development agency, just like the agencies that already serve the Western provinces, Northern Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. The establishment of a new Northern Development Agency will make federal development work in the North more effective.

**14. As a general principle, do you and your party support base-plus funding arrangements between the federal government and the territories that recognize the higher costs and unique circumstances of the North in delivering programs and services?**

Our Government fully recognizes the higher costs and unique circumstances of delivering programs and services in the North. This is why we developed a Building Canada Plan that ensured the all jurisdictions would receive at least \$25 million annually in base funding. We are committed to working with your government to design programs that meets the needs of the North.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide our views on these important issues facing our Territory. I look forward to working with your Government to release the potential of Canada's North in the best interests of those who live, work and support their families here.

Sincerely,

Brendan Bell  
Conservative Candidate,  
Western Arctic