

### Official Languages

Today, I will be tabling the Government's response to the Standing Committee on Government Operation's review of the *Official Languages Act*, Reality Check: Securing a Future for the Official Languages of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, in reviewing the Committee's report I was very pleased to see that, generally, we not only want the same things for our official languages, but have many areas of common thinking. I thank the Committee for the commitment and diligence they applied to their work. This will be fundamental in informing the Government's strategic plans for languages as we move forward.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, which leads work on languages on behalf of the Government, is undertaking a series of other important reviews on which we base our language plans. These include a review of the Aboriginal languages chapter of the Canada -NWT funding agreement; a review of the current Aboriginal languages strategy; the establishment of a single window service centre for Aboriginal languages; and the work we are doing with the Fédération Franco TeNoise regarding the improvements we will make in the delivery of government services in French.

As you will see from our response, stemming the loss of Aboriginal languages is at the root of our plans. We will be adopting an inclusive philosophical approach that allows

languages communities the opportunity to drive change in their own unique ways. We recognize that what is important to one language community may not mirror the priorities of another. Our comprehensive strategic plan, developed over the coming months, will demonstrate the individual nature of language communities and will respect the vision and goals of each.

One important piece of consultation work will be the Languages Symposium taking place in March 2010. As you know, March is Aboriginal Languages Month and we will undertake some exciting community events during the month, culminating in the Languages Symposium. I am pleased that the Chair of Standing Committee on Government Operations, Mr. Kevin Menicoche, agreed to co-chair the Symposium making our work on languages a truly collaborative piece of work of this Assembly.

Another critical initiative we are undertaking is a lobbying campaign with the federal government and national aboriginal organizations to shine the light on the plight of Aboriginal languages and secure additional funding to support them. And I hope the Members of this House will support and join us in our endeavours in this regard too.

We will work with language communities to determine individual priorities and assess demand. Once this work is undertaken a comprehensive plan will be written, including implementation plans and timelines. This will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly and will be a document we will be accountable to over the coming years.

Mr. Speaker, when I speak my own language I reflect the values of my people; I connect to our past and secure our future. It is my wish, and the wish of this Government, that all our people may do the same if they choose. That anyone who

wants to learn their language is assisted to learn, that anyone who wants to teach their language is supported to do so.

Again, I thank the members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations for their report and look forward to tabling our response later today.

Masi.