

# NWT Protected Areas Strategy

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*Hon. Brendan Bell*

*Thursday, March 10, 2005*

*Statement to the Legislative Assembly*

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has already stated in this House, the Government of the Northwest Territories supports the Mackenzie Gas Project, and a pipeline built down the Mackenzie Valley to deliver NWT natural gas to continental energy markets. Our government is committed to ensuring that the Mackenzie Gas Project, and other resource developments in the NWT, are constructed and operated in a manner that recognizes our respect for and unique relationship with our land, water and wildlife resources.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we achieved a significant step in ensuring the protection of significant spaces with the funding of the Mackenzie Valley Five-Year Action Plan under the Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy. Mr. Speaker, the Action Plan is the result of a strong partnership, led by communities and land claim organizations, and supported by the Territorial and Federal governments, industry and conservation organizations, including Ducks Unlimited, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the World Wildlife Fund Canada.

The budget currently before us identifies our commitment to provide \$1.5 million over the next five years to implement the Action Plan. This funding, along with a \$9 million commitment from the Federal Government and the \$5.4 million provided by environmental organizations, means we can continue proper conservation planning in the Mackenzie Valley, and allows us to develop our land in a sustainable manner.

Mr. Speaker, on February 21, 2005, Mr. Monte Hummel of World Wildlife Fund Canada presented a Keynote Address at the Nunavut Teachers' Conference in Iqaluit. Mr. Hummel stressed the pressing need to develop and implement protected areas strategies in the North. He drew attention in his remarks to the good work in progress by NWT communities to identify and reserve areas that are ecologically and culturally important to them. We believe this community driven approach, the partners have embraced, will stand as an example for other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to move forward on construction of the Mackenzie Gas Project, we must also advance the designation of protected areas. The Action Plan will help us meet our goal of identifying, reviewing, establishing interim protection and evaluating areas for protection in the Mackenzie Valley. It will also ensure the biodiversity and cultural significance of the Mackenzie Valley is protected for all generations.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the commitment of our Protected Areas Strategy partners, particularly communities, regional organizations and land claim organizations, to

working for a balanced approach to development and conservation. Together we can ensure the sustainable development of our natural resources.

Thank you.