

JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
Ottawa Federal Engagement Secretary
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MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, could the Minister please give us an overview of the responsibilities of the new deputy secretary for Federal Engagement? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Member knows, with this new federal government, there have been certainly increased interactions at all levels, and with a lot more of the work being done in Ottawa. There's been a substantial increase in what we call FPTs, or federal-provincial-territorial meetings. Specifically, the deputy secretary will provide strategic advice to the Premiers, Ministers, secretary to Cabinet, and deputy ministers on an engagement that the federal government aim at achieving the Government of the Northwest Territories' key objectives; lead the development of an updated, strategic, collaborative, and cohesive, all-of-government approach to the Government of the Northwest Territories' relationships with Ottawa, with the aim of advancing the Government of the Northwest Territories' key objectives at achieving mandate priorities; coordinate the Government of the Northwest Territories' engagement with the federal government and provide, particularly at the deputy minister and Ministerial levels on mandate priorities, regular reports to Cabinet and standing committees, as required, on effort and results achieved; represent the Government of the Northwest Territories on key files with senior federal officials, for example, discussions regarding new fiscal arrangements with Indigenous peoples; provide strategic advice, intelligence, insight, and information on federal priorities and actions that may affect the Northwest Territories; lead the design and delivery of research, education, and other activities that will increase the awareness and understanding by Canada of the unique context, issues, and opportunities that exist in the Northwest Territories.

I should add that there are still some outstanding issues with regard to devolution and, certainly, when we met with Minister Philpott and Minister Bennett, there will be substantial work involved with working with Aboriginal governments and the federal government, as they look at improving the areas of delivering programs and services; and it's incumbent on us to work with the Indigenous governments to make sure that they are able to access all of the funds that they are entitled to, and that they do not miss out. Also, we'll work with them to enhance their ability and enhance their access to resources. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Premier McLeod. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, can the Minister please confirm that just one person is being hired for this role? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier McLeod. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we have departments in this government that have 30 people to cover the range of tasks that are described as the responsibility of this one individual. So can the Minister please tell us, of all those tasks that he just outlined, what the priorities are? What are the top two priorities of the person in this role? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Green. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'd say the top priority would be to represent the Government of the Northwest Territories in key files with senior federal officials, for example, discussions regarding new fiscal relationships with Indigenous people; and lead the development in an updated, strategic, collaborative, and cohesive, all-of-government approach to the Government of the Northwest Territories' relationships with Ottawa, with the aim of advancing the Government of the Northwest Territories' key objectives and achieving mandate priorities, amongst others. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Premier McLeod. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I had the impression that one of the tasks of this office and one that would be very important is to do any problem solving around the flow of money from federal government's infrastructure pot, this \$600 million that is coming to the GNWT in the next 10 years. Is this a task that this office is going to undertake and on a priority basis? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I could see this person representing us in different functions, but I would say that infrastructure funding is well managed, well under way, and I do not see any significant issues going forward on infrastructure funding. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Premier McLeod. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that clarification. So is the priority task, then, of this office to pursue the themes that the Minister developed in his Red Alert statement of last November? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you. As long as you understand that the concern with the Red Alert was that there was no federal economic development strategy in place to replace the fact that there would be trillions of dollars of oil and gas left in the ground. So part of the Arctic Policy Framework would be a part of that. Also, reviewing the revised new fiscal arrangement with Aboriginal governments will be a large part of that, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Premier McLeod. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand the need for new fiscal arrangements and to make those a priority. I guess what I am less sure about is the need to spend more money trying to revive the dormant offshore. Can the Minister confirm that that is not something that this office will be doing? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The whole concern with the fact that there was no federal economic development strategy for the Northwest Territories, there is no federal vision in place for the North, and, through the Arctic Policy Framework, the federal government has assured us that they will be developing their approach and their vision for the North to 2030 and will guide all of their activities in the North, their funding in the North, and their investments in the North and how they will help transition the economy of the Arctic, which includes the three northern territories, Newfoundland, Labrador, Quebec, and Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Premier McLeod. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, so I feel like I am putting the pieces together now. So one of the key pieces will be the development and implementation or the remainder of the development and implementation of the Arctic Policy Framework; is that correct? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Premier McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Our biggest concern was that there was no accompanying federal economic development strategy, there was no vision for the North or for the Arctic. I guess the federal government has indicated and they are well under way in undertaking work to develop an Arctic Policy Framework. We have written to them and agreed to participate in the development of that framework. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Premier McLeod. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you very much to the Minister for his responses. Nothing further.