



Minister's Statement

No. _____

Date _____

The Honourable Eva Ariak
Premier

First Ministers' Meeting

Thank you Mr. Speaker. During my first two months as Premier, I have met several times with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Cabinet, including Nunavut Member of Parliament Leona Aglukkaq. Recently, these meetings have been focused on the 2009-2010 Federal Budget and Nunavut's priorities for infrastructure investment.

On January 6th, I was joined by my colleague, the Minister for Community and Government Services, for meetings with Ministers Baird, Strahl and Aglukkaq on our infrastructure needs. The Federal Government is proposing to stimulate the economy with short-term investments and is determining which ones would have the biggest impact now.

Mr. Speaker, Nunavut has an infrastructure deficit that we are addressing through our own capital plan and through federal monies including the Building Canada Fund and the Northern Housing Trust. We have been working with the federal departments to move forward with those projects to the best of our capacity and we have made suggestions to the Government of Canada on where they should focus increased infrastructure investments.

On January 15 and 16, I attended meetings on the economy with the Prime Minister and my provincial and territorial colleagues. First, we met with the leaders of the five National Aboriginal Organizations to discuss practical ways to increase Aboriginal participation in the economy. I was pleased to share the views expressed by Mary Simon, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, for improving education and skills development, and for focusing on housing construction as a way of promoting on-the-job skills development and economic growth.

On Friday, First Ministers reconvened and I had an opportunity to speak about our infrastructure priorities, including housing, for the 2009 and 2010 construction seasons. I also spoke about skills development needs within our Territory, the need for innovative approaches to federal funding for labour market development, and the need for Canada to renew the funding for Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development. At the appropriate time, I will table a report of this meeting.

Mr. Speaker, the results of these meetings should be reflected in announcements contained tomorrow in the 2009 Federal Budget. We intend to monitor those outcomes and to continue to work with Canada to strengthen our economy and to ensure that our labour force is well prepared for the future.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.