

## Address to the Nunatsiavut Assembly

President Johannes Lampe

Hopedale, Nunatsiavut

January 23, 2025



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- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
  - As we gather for this session of the Assembly, we are reminded of the significant responsibilities we hold in representing and serving our constituents and, indeed, all Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement.
  - Our collective efforts and dedication are crucial in addressing the challenges and opportunities that await. Let us approach our discussions in the spirit of collaboration, respect, and a shared commitment to the well-being of our people and our communities.

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- Mr. Speaker, I travelled to Ottawa this past November for an Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, chaired by ITK President Natan Obed and Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree.
  - Since the 2017 signing of the Inuit Nunangat Declaration, Inuit leadership and the Government of Canada have worked together through the ICPC to renew the Inuit-Crown relationship based on rights, respect, and cooperation.
  - During the meeting we discussed a number of key issues, including the progress being made on co-developing a federal policy to support commitments in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan.
  - We also discussed federal support for creating an Inuit Nunangat University, as well as ensuring Canada's new Arctic Foreign Policy reflects Inuit self-determination and positions Inuit as active partners in international relations.
  - We also raised the importance of developing a whole-of-government approach, including transforming Nutrition North Canada, into a more data-driven program.
  - As well, Mr. Speaker, there was discussion on pursuing legislative and non-legislative measures to address racism in the health-care system and developing federal Indigenous health legislation.

- We discussed the importance of federal departments applying an Inuit Nunangat lens to their work... and we reviewed ITK's federal pre-budget submission, to ensure high-priority areas aligning with government commitments.
  - Leaders also celebrated progress towards a federal acknowledgement and apology for the Government of Canada's role in the sled dog slaughter in Nunavik during the 1950s and 1960s.
  - In light of Prime Minister Trudeau's resignation and a federal election on the horizon, Mr. Speaker, it is crucial that the next government continues to prioritize and build upon these commitments. The Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee's work must remain a central focus to ensure that the rights and needs of Inuit are upheld and advanced, regardless of the political landscape.
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- Mr. Speaker, a meeting with federal Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly this fall provided an opportunity for Inuit leaders, including ITK President Natan Obed and myself, to discuss Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy.
  - We expressed our collective views on a draft plan and emphasized the importance for Inuit Nunangat to be fully integrated into the policy. Minister Joly acknowledged the importance of this inclusion and showed a willingness to ensure our voices are heard.
  - We also advocated for a stronger partnership between the Government of Canada and Inuit leaders, and discussed the importance of balancing economic development with environmental protection.
  - We highlighted the need to protect and promote Inuit culture, language, and traditions, with the Minister expressing support for cultural programs and initiatives that strengthen our heritage and way of life.
  - It was a productive meeting, Mr. Speaker, and marked a positive step towards ensuring Inuit perspectives are integral to Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy.
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- Mr. Speaker, I joined Makivvik President Pita Aatami and federal Environment and Climate Change Minister Steven Guilbeault in Ottawa at the end of November to a Memorandum of Understanding to begin negotiations to create a new Inuit Protected Area/national marine conservation area in northern Labrador. This announcement follows the successful completion of a feasibility study announced in March of last year.

- The proposed Inuit Protected Area/national marine conservation area is located in the Labrador Sea adjacent to Torngat Mountains National Park.
  - If established, the area designated under the Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act will protect up to 17,000 square kilometres of the coastal and marine waters of Nunatsiavut, helping to ensure a healthy marine ecosystem that supports Inuit of Labrador and Nunavik in being prosperous now and for generations to come.
  - The MOU highlights each party's commitment to advancing reconciliation and to implementing treaty rights and obligations through renewed nation-to-nation and government-to-government relationships. Inuit Knowledge and scientific knowledge will continue to play a central role in the negotiations for the new Inuit Protected Area/national marine conservation area. The Nunatsiavut Government, Makivvik, and Parks Canada, with support from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, will now focus on refining the final boundary and co-management structure, and continuing consultations with rights holders, partners, stakeholders, industry and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
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- Speaking of MOUs, Mr. Speaker, I attended the signing of the Memorandum of MOU last month between the governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec on a new Churchill Falls hydro development agreement.
- While this potential agreement could bring up to \$200 billion in badly-needed revenue for the province, it is important to emphasize that safeguarding Labrador Inuit from the downstream impacts of hydro developments and addressing energy security for Inuit communities must be priorities.
- Just like with the Muskrat Falls project, we worry about the downstream health and environmental effects future hydro developments will have on our way of life. The risk of increased methylmercury contamination is serious and could harm our traditional food sources and the health of our people. We know methylmercury concentrations are biomagnifying and bioaccumulating through the ecosystem from the Muskrat Falls development. This must be accounted for in any considerations of future hydro developments.
- Prior to the signing I had a conversation with Premier Andrew Furey, in which he committed to working collaboratively with the Nunatsiavut

Government to ensure Inuit rights and way of life are protected. We will hold him to that commitment, Mr. Speaker.

- It is important to note that, as it stands now, these new developments will not provide energy to any of our communities, and yet we face energy insecurity to the point that we are unable to build housing or other critical infrastructure because Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is not meeting our energy needs. We rely on high-cost diesel generation to power our communities. We deserve a cleaner and more stable power source to support future growth and development.
- As, well, Mr. Speaker, we fully expect the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, to only engage with legitimate section 35 rights holders when it comes to any future hydro developments on the Churchill River.
- Thank you, Mr. Speaker...