It’s hard to believe it’s been 20 years since the creation of our territory. In many ways, 1999 seems like yesterday; in other ways it’s hard to remember the time before Nunavut existed. Nunavummiut, we should all be proud of our accomplishments over the past 20 years. We are stronger than we were in two decades ago, but we know that it will take several more decades for our territory to be fully developed.

Lasting change takes time – we have to make tough decisions to ensure we meet Nunavummiut’s basic needs, while trying to grow our economy, jobs, infrastructure, social development and our unique culture and language.

I understand your frustrations and concerns, after 20 years. Things are not perfect. But I want to assure you that we are working hard. We hear you. And we are moving in the right direction.

A little over a year ago, I became Premier. Since then, your cabinet and government have been busy working to realize the goals laid out in Turaaqtavut. I want to provide you with a quick update on our accomplishments and work as we finish up year one of our mandate.

• We created the Department of Human Resources, with focus on Inuit employment.
• We’re closer than ever to in-territory addictions and trauma centre.
• We’re working hard to bring care closer to home for our Elders.
• We’re renewing our harassment-free workplace policy.
• We held territory-wide community consultations on education and the introduction of Bill 25, An Act to amend the Education Act and the Inuit Language Protection Act.
• We gave $130 million to 430 community-led projects to support, preserve and promote Inuit language, heritage, societal values, heritage, Elders and youth.
• We created 230 Inuktut books and resources - teacher resources, videos and activities, levelled student readers, a phonics app, resources to support social-emotional learning, magazines and novels.
• We held community-wide TB screening clinics in Qikiqtarjuaq, Whale Cove and Cape Dorset.
• We secured partnerships with mining companies to make sure Nunavummiut will benefit from employment and contracting opportunities over the next 20 years.
• We started construction on health centres in Sanikiliuaq and Cape Dorset. We’ve created strong measures to bring carbon tax revenue back into our economy.
• We are working to complete deep sea marine ports in Pond Inlet and Iqaluit.
• We have new or renovated schools in Cape Dorset, Coral Harbour and Kugaaruk.
• We introduced a country food program for patients staying at the Qikiqtani General Hospital.
• We implemented a Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit framework to shape government programs, policy development and service delivery.
• We opened the new Nunatta Campus building in Iqaluit.
• We broke ground on the future campus in Cambridge Bay.
• We introduced a therapeutic justice program in Cambridge Bay.
• We built new energy efficient power plants in Cape Dorset and Grise Fiord.
• We’re working on a water treatment plant and water reservoir expansion project in Arviat.
• We opened a new correctional healing centre in Iqaluit.
• We held an early childhood education training workshop for Nunavut’s child care facilities staff.

As we look to the next 20 years, I see more training and skills development for Nunavut Inuit to take on the opportunities and jobs they want, a strong economy and revitalized Inuit language. We are resilient, vibrant Nunavummiut, and have the same chances and opportunities as every Canadian. We are committed to fighting hard for you and our future. We all need to work together, to advocate, to create the change we want to see, to work hard and to create our own path.

Happy Nunavut Day!

Joe Savikataaq, Premier