

Diversity in the Government of the Northwest Territories

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to provide Members with an update on initiatives that have been launched under *20/20: A Brilliant North* that focus on diversity in the public service of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The Government is committed to increasing the representation of people with disabilities in the public service and creating an inclusive workplace open to all Northerners.

Human Resources staff met with the Director of the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities in January to share our Work Plan on Employability and to seek advice on our proposed direction and planned activities.

A Government of the Northwest Territories' Advisory Committee on Employability is currently being established and will be up and running later this month. The Committee will include the participation of non-government organizations that focus on disabilities. The Committee will advise on methods to promote, support and increase representation of persons with disabilities, while fostering a spirit of inclusion awareness among Government of the Northwest Territories' employees.

As we move this important work forward, the Department of Human Resources will continue to work collaboratively with the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities and other non-government organizations.

In October 2009, focus group sessions with employees and participants from non-government organizations were held in Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik. These sessions helped identify potential barriers to increasing representation of

persons with disabilities to assist in the development of a plan that will be used to attract and retain disabled employees.

Information encouraging resident disabled candidates to identify any accommodations they may require during the hiring process will be added to the Government's employment opportunities web page in the next couple of days. Reducing or eliminating barriers in the hiring process is one of many ways to create diversity.

Mr. Speaker, sensitivity training session for Government of the Northwest Territories' staff is being piloted next month. If the program is a success, we will aim to provide future sessions for Government of the Northwest Territories' employees across the Northwest Territories.

Sensitivity training gives participants a greater understanding of the workforce that is represented by persons with disabilities and an understanding of biases, beliefs and assumptions about persons with disabilities and their employability.

And finally, another exciting initiative is the development of an overall Government of the Northwest Territories Recruitment Strategy that, in keeping with our commitment to diversity, will include the recruitment of persons with disabilities. As with other diversity initiatives, working with non-government organizations is key in the development of this strategy.

Mr. Speaker, 2010 is an exciting year as we reinvest in the public service and we look forward to continuing to work with our partners on achieving diversity in the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.