

**NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH (MARCH)**

Mr. Speaker, March is National Nutrition Month. Although healthy eating is important all year, March is the month when healthy eating is emphasized and promoted across Canada.

A healthy eating survey concluded at the end of February. In March, activities will include the promotion of healthy eating in schools through Family Nutrition Fairs in communities. The Department will also have nutrition tips posted daily on our website.

The national theme of Nutrition Month is “Celebrate Food...From Field to Table”. This gives us the opportunity to promote the inclusion of healthy traditional Northern foods as a way to maintain good nutrition.

We will also be partnering with other organizations in April to promote healthy eating and home-grown foods.

“A Foundation for Change” Action Plan has a goal of wellness for our communities, families and individuals. It supports individuals to make the best possible choices for themselves and their families.

Healthy eating is a key component to preventing chronic disease and obesity, which has become a major public health concern. In 2008, Stats Canada reported that 51 per cent of Canadians were overweight or obese. Obesity leads to chronic disease and poor health. Diabetes is also a concern in the North and it is linked with poor nutrition and lack of healthy life style.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure all Northerners have every opportunity to be physically fit and to choose healthy foods. Our role is to provide proper sound evidence so people can make healthy choices like fruits and vegetables, some of which can be grown locally in greenhouses or community gardens. Prevention through good nutrition is the key to overall good health. This is essential for the healthy development of our children.

Making healthy choices also empowers individuals and families to have the personal responsibility for self-care and lessening the burden on our health system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.