

Recognition of Small Business Week

Mr. Speaker, this is Small Business Week, an opportunity to recognize and celebrate entrepreneurs and their businesses across the Northwest Territories. I would also like to recognize Co-op Week and the 16 cooperatives that serve residents in the Northwest Territories.

Small businesses play a vital role in the economy of our communities and our Territory. They provide products, services, knowledge and skills that are the foundation of sustainable local economies and enhance our quality of life. Mr. Speaker, spend some time in any of our communities and you will find the heart of local economies lies with our entrepreneurs, and the small and medium-sized businesses they operate.

As jurisdictions across Canada celebrate Small Business Week I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the contributions that these businesses make to the Northwest Territories economy.

From the one person home-based business, to the entrepreneur who took an idea and turned it into a business employing dozens of northerners, our small and medium sized enterprises consistently punch above their weight when it comes to the impact they have on our economy.

These businesses create jobs and wealth in all sectors and in all five regions of our territory. Ranging from traditional economic activities like trapping and basket making to manufacturing and agriculture we see the residents of the Northwest Territories taking advantage of the economic opportunities this land has to offer.

The Government of the Northwest Territories understands the vital role our small and medium-sized businesses play in keeping our economy vibrant and strong.

That is why we have increased our investment in the Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development Policy to \$3.5 million for 2010-2011. That is why we have developed programs like the Tourism Product Diversification and Marketing Program, which has seen this Government distribute more than \$4 million in assistance to tourism businesses since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, one of the five goals of the 16th Legislative Assembly is to have a diversified economy that provides all communities and regions with opportunities and choices.

It is an important goal and it is one this Government remains focused on. Through our continued commitment to develop programs and services that help our small and medium-sized businesses succeed and through the skill, intelligence and hard work of our entrepreneurs we can realize that goal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.