

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH (MARCH)

Mr. Speaker, March is Nutrition Month in Canada. The national theme continues to be "Celebrate food...from the land to table!" What we eat plays an important role in our health and well-being. The Department of Health and Social Services recognizes this through one of the goals in its action plan, *A Foundation for Change* – communities, families and individuals make healthy choices and are protected from disease. This goal is achieved by promoting healthy living and wellness.

Last year we invested \$74,000.00 through our Health Promotion Fund to help community groups and organizations deliver a variety of programs related to healthy living, including those that supported healthy eating and active living. One example was the Fort Smith Healthy Eating and Active Living Program (HEAL). Twenty residents completed the ten week program that combined daily physical activities, weigh-ins, and nine healthy living and eating modules. The group as a whole lost almost 200 pounds over the ten weeks. Other projects included; Men's Cooking Classes at the Salvation Army; Tumbling for Tots program in Norman Wells that promoted healthy eating and active living for toddlers ages 3- 5; A Healthy Living Program in Tulita that focused on healthy eating, not smoking around children and supporting pre and post natal moms;

Kids in the Kitchen in Hay River as well as the promotion of breastfeeding through Moms, Boobs and Babies, a Yellowknife Breastfeeding Support Group. Our “Drop the Pop” campaign continues to be successful with 43 schools participating. This campaign provides schools with funding to deliver community-based projects that emphasize the importance of healthy foods and avoiding sugary drinks.

Mr. Speaker, in 2009, around 27% of NWT residents 18 and over were considered obese and 59% were considered physically inactive. This is higher than the rest of Canada, where 18% were considered obese and 48% physically inactive. Addressing these issues starts with our children and their families. Through programs like “Drop the Pop”, we are making a healthy choice an easy choice.

Throughout March, we will be working in collaboration with partners including the Northern Nutrition Association in celebrating Nutrition Month. We also continue to partner with many territorial groups through our Health Promotion Fund. Community groups looking to support community-led projects can access the Health Promotion Funding. The application form is on our website, www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca.

Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities of this Assembly is to focus on prevention by promoting healthy choices and lifestyles and the role of personal and family

responsibility. We can achieve our goal of healthy, educated people only if we all work together and do our part. Throughout Nutrition Month, I would like to challenge our residents to be role models and champions of healthy changes in their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.