

Northern Mining Workforce Initiative Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to update you on collaboration between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the three Northwest Territories diamond mines – BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc., Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. and De Beers Canada Inc. – under the Northern Mining Workforce Initiative Memorandum of Understanding.

The Memorandum of Understanding was negotiated to assist the Government of the Northwest Territories and the diamond mines to work their shared goal of increasing the number of Northwest Territories residents employed at the mines.

Collectively, we have two objectives under the Memorandum of Understanding. Our first goal is to improve Northern skills and experience. We will address this through more coordinated training and through improved transportation options for getting workers from Northwest Territories communities to the mine sites. Our second goal is to attract and retain Northwest Territories residents so that as many mine workers as possible can be Northwest Territories residents.

Work under the Memorandum of Understanding is guided by a Steering Committee, made up of the most senior and influential executives from the three diamond mines, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and myself. Staff assigned to working groups work together to investigate options and put forward recommendations to the Steering Committee.

Individuals from each organization involved in the Memorandum of Understanding have shown dedication, openness and a strong spirit of cooperation.

Last week the Steering Committee met to bring new momentum to our collaborative efforts to maximize Northern employment at the Northwest Territories diamond mines. The Steering Committee reviewed the progress of working groups on training, travel and residency. These groups have been busy over the past year, investigating practical possibilities and examining problems.

Industry, Tourism and Investment has played and will continue to play a large role in the residency committee. The first major task of the residency committee has been to understand the opportunities and challenges of attracting and retaining a skilled northern workforce. The mines, Industry, Tourism and Investment and the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics collaborated on a survey of the diamond mines' current employees.

Options for addressing longer-term challenges will also be investigated. The Memorandum of Understanding parties will look for opportunities to work with a number of partners, including community governments and other agencies and actors, to implement concrete actions that address challenges identified by the survey.

Industry, Tourism and Investment will continue to work together with Education, Culture and Employment and with the three diamond mines to achieve our shared goal of maximizing NWT employment at the Northwest Territories' diamond mines.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.