

Investing in NWT Film

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has committed to supporting the film industry to further develop the skills and competencies of NWT film producers, build infrastructure, assist below-the-line crew and support services, and help develop marketing and communications plans for films made in the NWT.

Last month, I had the pleasure of attending the first annual NWT Film and Media Awards that concluded this year's Yellowknife International Film Festival. In accepting an award for his impact in the NWT film industry, the godfather of the NWT's film industry Terry Woolf said our industry was experiencing a renaissance. Today I am happy to amplify his words, share some successes, and highlight how the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is sustaining this renaissance with investments in the future of this important sector in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot talk about the significant growth that we have seen in our film sector without recognizing the NWT Professional Media Association. Their role in our local industry has been, and continues to be, a critical driver of its success. Without their mentorship, support, and leadership, it is unlikely that the slate of nominations at this year's inaugural awards show would have been as full as it was.

While in attendance this year, I was able to announce a new Film Apprenticeship Program that will soon provide opportunities for the Northwest Territories' film workforce to gain on-the-job experience with major film productions. This program will be delivered by the NWT Professional Media Association with the financial backing of the Department of ITI's NWT Film Commission and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. This new support is one that originated in a conversation I had with Ms. Jennifer Walden on the set of Red Snow. It will now provide opportunities for up-and-coming filmmakers to get some of the guidance and mentorship they need to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, this year's Yellowknife International Film Festival was also an opportunity to shine the spotlight on, and celebrate the success of, some of the projects that have been made possible, directly and indirectly, by our government's investments under Take One – the NWT Film Strategy and Action Plan. They include projects like the big ticket premiere of Ms. Jennifer Walden and Mr. Jeremy Emerson's *Elijah and the Rock Creature*. It was exciting to see the hard work, passion and time invested in this project rewarded in a first showing that sold out in minutes.

This year's festival also featured films like *I Hold the Dehcho in My Heart* and *Revolution Moosehide*. Productions that further confirmed the talents and skills of local producers and crews which also serves to share important cultural stories from our territory. Off screen, the 2018 Film Festival included a program of workshops, speakers, and networking which brought together talent from within the territory and beyond. Together, they were able to gain valuable knowledge, and encourage each other.

Through ITI's NWT Film Commission, the Government of the Northwest Territories is investing, every day, in the growth and diversity of our economy and its film sector. The NWT Film Rebate Program, in particular, has helped the NWT support high profile productions like the multi-award winning *Sun at Midnight*, while leveraging an estimated \$1.8 million in economic activity from our \$280,000 investment. Through film support contributions under our Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development, or SEED Policy, we provide financial resources for local film makers to produce and promote their films.

We are also increasing the profile of the NWT with location marketing and global networking led by our Film Commission which is attracting and encouraging both local and guest producers to film in the NWT. The film and media sector offers extraordinary opportunities to share our stories, and diversify our economy. We continue to invest in this area, and look forward to more success in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.