

Strengthening Our Northern Workforce

Madam Speaker, as employment levels reach historic highs, tight labour markets are being experienced across the Northwest Territories and Canada. To address labour shortages, the Government of the Northwest Territories is working to strengthen our northern workforce through legislation, funding programs, academic and technical supports, and enhanced programs and policies.

Madam Speaker, Skills 4 Success is the GNWT's overarching labour market framework. Its purpose is to improve employment success for NWT residents, close skill gaps for in-demand jobs, and more effectively respond to employer and industry needs. The Skills 4 Success Action Plan for 2021 to 2025 was released earlier this year and will serve as a roadmap for education, training, and skills building activities and investments.

Madam Speaker, we are making progress in several areas. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is building a comprehensive postsecondary education system through the *Post-Secondary Education Act*, which will establish the framework to recognize post-secondary education institutes and programs in the NWT. Work continues to transform Aurora College into a polytechnic university to increase access to quality post-secondary education opportunities for Northerners and provide training for jobs in demand. A review is also underway to improve our student supports under the NWT Student Financial Assistance program. Each of these pieces is important as we evolve post-secondary education in the NWT and equip students for successful careers.

Madam Speaker, to meet the needs of our workforce, ECE delivers a suite of Labour Market programs, which provide funding for a variety of areas such as training, wage subsidies, and job creation. The department is also working on making labour market information easily accessible for our residents to guide them in education and career planning.

Madam Speaker, we know that there is a high demand for tradespeople across the NWT and Canada. To support our trades workforce, the department launched innovative supports this year. Build Your Skills is a program that helps to identify any gaps apprentices might have in their skillset, and supports them to achieve those requirements, in areas such as math, reading and science. To assist apprentices who face challenges with technical training, the department also launched the Virtual Learning Strategist pilot, an online learning platform that pairs each apprentice with a Learning Strategist. The Learning Strategist will work with the apprentice to identify challenges such as skill gaps, learning disabilities, exam anxiety, and individual factors that could affect their performance.

Madam Speaker, this week across Canada, National Skilled Trades and Technology Week will be celebrated as we raise awareness of the many career opportunities in the skilled trades and technology sectors in the NWT and nationally. This week, we honour the 40 Apprenticeship High Mark award recipients and the 52 individuals who have obtained journeyman certification this year in the Northwest Territories. I offer my congratulations to all the award recipients on their achievements and extend my thanks to employers of apprentices.

Madam Speaker, high employment rates, although positive for job seekers, can be difficult for employers struggling to fill vacant positions. This fall, the GNWT introduced a new Francophone Stream to the Northwest Territories Nominee Program. This was identified as an action of our 2017-2022 Immigration Strategy to attract foreign nationals to the NWT whose skills are aligned with current workforce needs, and to increase francophone applications to the Nominee Program. One key difference in the new stream is that the nominee is the one to complete the application process, allowing employers to focus on running their operation as opposed to completing paperwork.

Madam Speaker, the people of this territory are the greatest resource and the driving force behind the territory's economy and sustainable communities. This government is dedicated to equipping residents with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need for employment success.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.