

Supporting NWT Harvesters

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has affected us all and the pandemic has highlighted why meeting these mandate commitments are so important. As global supply chains have been disrupted and economic activity has been restricted, the need for locally sourced food has become even more valuable.

Northern harvesters and trappers have been deeply impacted by COVID-19. Their economic livelihoods have been affected, which is an important part of northern culture. That is why now, more than ever, we need to support harvesting and land-based programs.

Mr. Speaker, I stood here during the last sitting and announced that the Government of the Northwest Territories, through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, had launched three new programs in the Fall of 2020 aimed at supporting both families in need and harvesters during the pandemic.

These programs included a country foods harvesting subsidy, harvesting training and mentorship funding and the launch of the Take a Family on the Land Program.

I am proud to say that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources was able to support all eligible applications received under these programs and has provided an estimated \$340,000 to harvesters and trappers. The funding was distributed to just over 20 organizations across the territory.

But we are not done. For ongoing programs such as the Take a Family on the Land Program, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources plans to reach out to partner organizations this year to ask for feedback so that we can do an even better job next year.

For the new pilot Trapper Mentorship Program, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is working with interested regional Indigenous governments to collaborate on the development of the program to best meet regional needs. We are working hard towards launching this pilot program in the coming weeks.

As for our fur industry, Northwest Territories trappers are well-positioned and protected from ongoing market disruption through the Government of the Northwest Territories' Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program.

In 2020, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources increased both eligibility and grubstake amounts to offset the challenges trappers faced due to the recent downturn in the fur industry. We will continue to communicate with trappers to show our support for the industry.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is also continuing to work with our partners to evaluate the existing programs and develop harvester mentorship programs that support a strong and resilient traditional economy.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a tough year for harvesters and trappers. The Northwest Territories traditional economy can and will continue to endure, thanks to the hard work of these individuals. The Government of the Northwest Territories will continue to stand with harvesters and trappers, and support them, as part of our efforts to bolster the traditional economy, create employment opportunities in small communities, and increase food security for Northwest Territories residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.