

Implementation of the Mineral Development Strategy

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories made a commitment in its mandate to support mineral exploration and the mining sector by implementing the Mineral Development Strategy.

I rise today to update my colleagues on our progress. Mr. Speaker, the Mineral Development Strategy has five pillars: creating a competitive edge; establishing a new regulatory environment; enhancing Aboriginal engagement and capacity; promoting sustainability; and enriching workforce development and public awareness.

In our work to create a competitive edge for mining in the NWT, we have placed incentives and advanced world-class geoscience to improve our jurisdiction's investment attractiveness.

Over three years, we have invested \$1.2 million in our Mining Incentive Program. Our first two years of investment leveraged an additional \$3.36 million in exploration spending by companies and prospectors on their supported projects. In light of this interest, I am pleased with the decision last week to increase the budget for this fund by \$600,000.

We have provided extra work credits through our Exploration Incentive Program as a stop-gap for companies in uncertain economic times. It is a program that I am happy to advise Members will be extended for an additional two years.

We have invested in developing the geoscience research and data that will enable responsible decision making. Regional maps now detail the geology of the Gwichin, Sahtu, Inuvialuit, and Dehcho regions as well as the Wekeezhii Resource Management and Akaitcho areas.

Mr. Speaker, we see our investment in geoscience as part of the broader public good. Not only does the Northwest Territories Geological Survey generate and collect this information, it makes it available at no charge.

Our mineral industry drill core collection, including the world's-largest publicly-available kimberlite collection, will be housed in a geological materials storage facility that we will open this summer. This collection, which will be available for examination year-round, significantly reduces costs for companies and prospectors looking to evaluate older mineral prospects that may hold promise as new exploration projects.

Finally Mr. Speaker, under the pillar of creating a competitive edge, we continue to find ways to promote exploration and mineral investment in the NWT. Last year's gala celebration for our 25-year history with the diamond industry is an example of how we are using the Unlocking our Potential brand to advance the profile and recognition of our territory's natural wealth and redouble our efforts to communicate our government's support for mining.

Mr. Speaker, while geologic and economic considerations are important factors in determining mineral exploration and investment decisions, so is our region's policy

climate. Last week the Fraser Institute published its 2016 survey of mining and exploration companies worldwide.

It ranked the NWT as the 7th most-attractive Canadian Jurisdiction for mining. Out of 104 jurisdictions worldwide, the NWT was ranked 11th for best practices and mineral potential and 21st for investment attractiveness.

As part of establishing a new regulatory environment, we have begun work to create a new leading-edge Mineral Resources Act. This work is also part of our mandate commitment to advance the territorial vision of land and resource management in accordance with the Land Use and Sustainability Framework. While creating legislation from scratch is a long process, we will draw on the latest science and best practices to create an Act that will be key to the future of our largest industry.

Our work to promote the sustainability of our mineral development sector has included permafrost and surficial geology research in the Slave Geological Province, which will help to ensure that any new developments in this region are undertaken with an eye to minimizing environmental impacts on our land and water.

Mr. Speaker, all of this this work serves to raise public awareness for the mining industry and its importance to our territory.

It is a message that we take every opportunity to deliver. Working through its Client Service and Community Relations Unit, the Department of ITI has facilitated workshops with Aboriginal governments to create regional mineral development strategies. We have worked closely with members of the Intergovernmental Council to promote NWT mining and minerals at events; further advancing the spirit of collaboration upon which our successful, modern mining industry was built.

Meanwhile, through the delivery of the Mining Matters program we are also engaging students in the stories of NWT minerals and promoting career opportunities in mining in a user-friendly way.

As we work to implement the Mineral Development Strategy, we will continue to improve the climate for exploration and investment in our territory. And, as market and economic conditions change we will need to focus and adjust the actions and investments in our strategy to meet this intended mark.

I look forward to continuing to shepherd this strategy and advancing the NWT mining sector that is creating meaningful jobs and opportunities for our people and a stable, competitive future for our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.