

**Securing International Markets for NWT Furs**

The Government of the Northwest Territories made a commitment in its mandate to increase exports by promoting NWT products to international markets. I rise, today, to update my colleagues on recent activities supporting this commitment.

I am pleased to inform Members that following a long and concentrated lobby by our government and its partners, the Inuvialuit have been formally recognized under the Indigenous exception to the European Union's seal products prohibition.

This means that the immense purchasing potential of the European Union is now open to Inuvialuit-harvested sealskins and sealskin products.

It is a landmark agreement for Inuvialuit harvesters and I would like to recognize the extraordinary role and partnership of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation in the work that has resulted in this exemption.

We will now get to work to realizing the long-awaited benefits of this decision.

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment will incorporate the marketing of NWT seal products to the European Union under its existing Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur brand. Meanwhile, with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, we will be advancing a certification program to promote consumer confidence amongst European travellers who will now be able to return home with sealskin products purchased in the NWT.

I would also like to thank the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada for their assistance in reaching this landmark deal. The settlement is timely, as NWT seal products can now also benefit from planned marketing by the Government of Canada under the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, while this is big news, it is certainly not the only work that our government has done to promote the interests of NWT furs in international markets.

Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs are currently on sale at the Fur Harvesters and American Saga Auctions in Helsinki, the world's largest fur action sale, and the largest event for our government-supported brand each year.

In preparation for this auction, we also ensured representation for NWT trappers at the China Fur and Leather Products Fair in Beijing. The tradeshow is a major international event, with buyers from Europe, Asia, and North America coming together to evaluate stock from producers. Our showcase, this year, included luxury garments custom designed to demonstrate what can be done with Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur alongside pelts at various stages of dressing.

Our investment was able to secure new buyers in Chinese and Russian markets, two of the largest markets for fur in the world, and markets we believe will come through with purchases in Helsinki.

Mr. Speaker, maintaining the globally-respected and recognized Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur brand cuts through the noise of a worldwide marketplace for NWT trappers.

Through this program, which we deliver in partnership with the Department of Environment, and Natural Resources, we provide a guaranteed price for furs harvested and submitted for sale. It ensures trappers aren't left in the lurch during the long gap between the bush and the auction hall. If the furs sell at a greater price, the difference is returned to the trapper. There are no losers: it's revenue-neutral for our government, and it provides stability and certainty for our trappers and their families.

Mr. Speaker, all of this supports an industry worth more than \$2 million dollars to our economy each year. It puts money in the pockets of our trappers and brings diversity to our economy. The social and cultural benefit it provides citizens across our territory is priceless, and irreplaceable.

Expanding international market access will only serve to enhance all of these benefits. It's why our government has chosen to remain ahead of the curve with one of the world's most comprehensive support systems for traditional economic activity.

We look forward to continuing to expand the international horizons for Northwest Territories fur to preserve and enrich the future of trapping in the NWT.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.