

RECOGNIZING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES OLYMPIANS

Mr. Speaker, today, I rise as the Minister responsible for Sport to congratulate three prominent athletes, all with ties to the Northwest Territories, who are competing for Canada at the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. On behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, and all of our residents, I am proud to speak today about Brendan Green, Jesse Cockney, and Kevin Koe.

Hay River's Brendan Green will represent Canada in men's biathlon events. Brendan was a member of Team NWT at the Arctic Winter Games in Yellowknife in 1998 and in Whitehorse in 2000. He has competed in the Canada Games in 2007 in both Biathlon and Cross-Country Skiing, where he won gold in the Cross-Country Skiing event. As his career advanced, he reached the ultimate achievement in sport, appearances at the Olympic Games in Vancouver in 2010 and again in Sochi in 2014. Through his career, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been proudly supporting him through the High Performance Athlete Grant program going back to 2005. His hard work, dedication and commitment make him a strong role model for young athletes across the Northwest Territories.

Jesse Cockney started cross-country skiing in Yellowknife at age three. He carries on the proud family tradition in the sport. His father, Angus Cockney, a former TEST Skier and accomplished artist, represented the Northwest Territories on a number of occasions, and won two gold medals at the Canada Games in 1975. As Jesse continued to advance in his own career, he too reached the podium with three gold medals at the 2011 Canada Winter Games. He would go on to make his Olympic debut in Sochi in 2014. In addition to his rigorous training, Jesse takes the time to be actively involved in mentoring other young Indigenous athletes.

Kevin Koe comes from the well-known Koe family of curlers, and got his start in the sport in his earlier days in Yellowknife. Kevin participated in the Arctic Winter Games in 1992 in Whitehorse and in 1994 in Slave Lake. He is a three-time Canadian champion and two-time world curling champion. I am sure the family is brimming with pride as Kevin attends his first Olympic Games as a member of Team Canada. While Kevin now makes his home in Alberta, we in the Northwest Territories still take pride in claiming him as one of our own.

Winter sports are natural to Northwest Territories athletes. Sports not only keep our residents healthy and strong, but they develop lifelong teamwork and leadership skills. We are proud of all of our athletes, and having three athletes from the Northwest Territories reaching this level of success is empowering. These are true role models for all Northwest Territories residents, from children to seniors, whether you're a weekend warrior or a high-performance athlete.

It is with great pride, that on behalf of all residents of the Northwest Territories, I acknowledge the achievements of these northern Olympians, and wish them great success in PyeongChang.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.