

Investing in NWT Parks

Mr. Speaker, it is a sure sign that spring is just around the corner! The draw for extended-stay campsites at the Prelude and Reid Lake campgrounds will be held this Sunday in Yellowknife.

These popular campgrounds, Mr. Speaker, are just two of the 17 facilities that are managed and maintained by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment across our territory.

For summer visitors, the NWT camping experience is a key element of our competitive tourism product. NWT parks offer a spectacular staging point from which to enjoy our unique natural environment as well as our communities, events, celebrations and activities.

Last summer, with the easing of travel restrictions, Canadians and international travellers flocked to Northwest Territories parks in large numbers.

Seven of the NWT's 17 parks recorded all-time visitation highs in the 2022 season; for example, the number of overnight visitors in the Beaufort Delta region was four times higher than in 2021.

Overall, more than 17 thousand overnight visits were registered by individuals from outside of the Northwest Territories; representing a full rebound to pre-pandemic levels.

Mr. Speaker, in the face of this demand, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment will invest close to two million dollars, this summer, in the ongoing maintenance and improvement of our territory's parks and campgrounds.

In the Inuvik region, a new deck and performance area is being constructed at Gwich'in Park that will feature tiered seating. Meanwhile, at Happy Valley Park, ITI will be increasing the capacity of the park's shower and washroom facilities.

The Fort Providence campground will be getting a new adventure themed playground this year while the Sambaa Deh Falls Territorial Park will be getting an upgrade to its shower building with new mechanical infrastructure and, among other enhancements, improving its wheel chair accessibility.

A new change room and concession are slated for construction on the beach at the Hay River Territorial Park. Shower buildings and laundry facilities are being added to NWT Parks facilities at the 60th Parallel and Little Buffalo River Crossing.

A manager's residence is being constructed at the Queen Elizabeth Park in Fort Smith and the visitor information centre at Blackstone Park is being renovated to better display the centre's interpretive components and cultural displays.

Mr. Speaker, as ITI prepares for the upcoming parks season, amendments to the Territorial Parks Regulations, made last year, are also coming into force.

Mr. Speaker, this year, the GNWT's online reservation site will open the week of April 4th for the 2023 season and campgrounds across the territory will open their gates beginning May 15th.

As residents and visitors alike enjoy NWT's parks and campgrounds this summer, the Department of ITI will be working to keep them running safely and smoothly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.