

Growth in the NWT Tourism Sector

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is just a bit different.

Just a bit different is the tagline of NWT Tourism's new marketing campaign. It capitalizes on the unique northern realities that make our territory a special and spectacular travel destination.

As we continue to build our territory's tourism industry, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is investing to maximize the economic growth and diversity that this sector can provide.

Guided by our Tourism 2020 plan, we are investing in training, capacity building and product development. We are working to ensure that tourism operators have a skilled workforce to draw and rely on; and that activities and packages are tailored and available for travellers that arrive to share and experience our territory.

In today's competitive tourism marketplace, programs like our Tourism and Business Mentorships, the Community Tourism Infrastructure Contribution and Tourism Product Diversification and Marketing offer examples of how the GNWT is working and investing to ensure that we are, and continue to be, just a bit different.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is another half to our tourism equation. We can have the best tour operators and packages in the world, but if no one travels here, we will not have a tourism industry.

It is NWT Tourism, under contract to our government that is responsible for marketing and selling our spectacular territory to the world.

To remain competitive, our marketing needs to be nimble; to derive opportunities from trends; and to recognize our strengths and build on them.

The NWT Tourism Marketing Plan for 2018-2019, which I will be tabling later today, does just that.

It includes a transition from print to online content marketing; and a digital audit to gauge attitudes and sentiments about the Northwest Territories.

To better reach potential travellers, NWT Tourism will use social media platforms in each target market to deliver their messages.

The Explorers' Guide will get a new look; styled as a lure piece rather than a catalogue.

While NWT Tourism will maintain its broad marketing reach, increased emphasis will be placed on Asia this year, specifically China, where we are seeing exponential visitor growth and, around which, we can leverage broader Canadian investments focussed on the Year of Canada-China tourism.

To support its new approach and add to its marketing assets, NWT Tourism will be investing, in the second of five region-specific photo shoots this year. Each of our regions has something spectacular to offer visitors and travellers. These shoots capture that, focusing on one region per year and rotating annually.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach the new fiscal year, and prepare to implement the new and innovative approaches highlighted in our marketing plan, we are also approaching a new camping season.

In what was a record-breaking 2016–2017 season that saw over \$200 million in visitor spending, I am pleased to advise Members that a new high was also set for people enjoying our territorial parks.

Our parks welcomed over 35,000 overnight visitors in 2017; an increase of 20% over the previous camping season.

It is yet another indicator of the growth that we are seeing in our tourism industry.

More so, Mr. Speaker, it demonstrates that our partnership approach to developing the NWT's tourism industry is yielding the results we are looking for, and that it is contributing to the growth and diversification of our economy.

What the Northwest Territories offers travellers is just a bit different, and it's this difference that truly makes the territory a world-class destination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.