

**Mining Week 2020**

Mr. Speaker, every June the Government of the Northwest Territories, together with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, and the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission of the NWT and Nunavut, mark mining week in our Territory.

This year will be no exception. From June 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> we will, once again, recognize this industry that is a foundation of our economy. What will be different this year is that with COVID-19 restrictions in place, Mining Week will take place entirely online.

A robust calendar of social media content is being planned. A dedicated mining week page on the Mining North website will provide access to geologist-led virtual rock walks, an opportunity to engage with representatives of the NWT Geological Survey, short videos, a kids activity booklet, and links to feature stories, infographics, and a list of resources and information.

For its part, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment's Mineral and Petroleum Resources Division will be introducing an App with two guided walking tours that we hope will encourage the public to explore our local geology. One walking tour will feature the Ranney Hill Trail, while the second will walk participants through downtown Yellowknife. Both will highlight and offer information on this region's varied geology and the rich mining industry that it has sustained.

Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to mark mining week this year, I would also like to recognize the importance of not just our diamond mines, but the exploration companies and prospectors that also make up our resource sector.

Just as it underpinned our economy before the pandemic struck, we will need mining, exploration and development to anchor our economic recovery from COVID-19.

Mining and exploration has always been the biggest source of private sector jobs and income for our residents. When they return to full operations or when new projects advance they will, once again, be major buyers of products and services from NWT companies and employers to our residents.

We recognize that these are trying times, and, beyond addressing health and safety concerns as a first priority, we have worked to protect the livelihood of NWT residents and the many associated businesses working in our resource industry.

Like we have with all sectors of the NWT economy, we continue to consider how we can best support our mineral sector through this period of reduced or limited activity.

We initially suspended payment and work requirements to protect mineral tenure holders until the end of June. I am happy today to announce that this relief is being extended for another three months until September 24<sup>th</sup>. This is an ongoing interim measure while we continue to work on more fulsome relief measures that require legislative change and consultation with our Indigenous partners, including those who share in the NWT's resource revenues.

We have also made changes to our Mining Incentive Program to strengthen our support this year for proposed mineral exploration projects.

Overall, priority will be given to projects that offer the greatest potential to advance both mineral exploration and economic recovery in the NWT. Applicants are being advised to improve the attractiveness of their applications by committing to use services provided by NWT businesses and contractors to conduct most or all components of their work.

Mr. Speaker, through this COVID pandemic, our resource companies and their contractor partners have, once again, proven themselves to be strong corporate citizens.

In particular, our diamond mines have worked with the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer and the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission to identify and put into practice very stringent guidelines and conditions governing the movement and interactions of their workforces. I want to thank them for their continued commitment to our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I have committed to being a strong advocate for our mining sector, and I stand by that today. I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to seek out the online presentations and resources events that will mark Mining Week beginning on June 21<sup>st</sup>; and to take some time to acknowledge the opportunities and benefits which have been afforded to our Territory by our historic relationships with mining.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.