

NWT Manufacturing Strategy - What We Heard

Mr. Speaker, the expansion and growth of the Northwest Territories' manufacturing sector offers a means to diversify the economy and encourage greater economic development and investment.

For that reason, our government has committed to developing a northern Manufacturing Strategy in collaboration with industry and the NWT's Manufacturers' Association.

In this government's mandate, we have committed to developing an NWT Manufacturing Strategy that will: expand our territory's manufacturing sector; identify areas of potential growth; promote and market NWT manufactured products; and, aid in the professional and technological advancement of manufacturing in the NWT.

The development of this Strategy is being guided by research and engagement with existing manufacturers, prospective manufacturers, key stakeholders and the public.

The Department investigated the market factors that point to what needs to be done. Dialogues, public engagement sessions and industry meetings have given us an understanding of what stakeholders want to do, and facility tours and industry meetings have demonstrated what can be done.

Over the past few months, ITI's project team hosted 11 public sessions and an additional 60 stakeholder engagements; talking face-to-face with as many as 174 individuals about manufacturing in the NWT.

A web-based engagement portal was also used to gather feedback from those who were unable to attend engagement opportunities in person. The website was accessed 262 times and follow-up communications were conducted by phone or e-mail.

Mr. Speaker, the findings of our meetings and engagements will be formally captured in a What We Heard Report that we will release in April. It will offer an understanding of the challenges, ideas and opportunities raised by NWT residents, manufacturers and stakeholders.

Many of the discussions addressed the common challenges of working and operating a business in the North. Freight and utility costs, in particular, are impacting our manufacturers. Staff recruitment, training and retention were also identified as challenges.

As expected, our government's procurement policies and practices were a topic of much discussion. We recognize that more communication and clarity will be needed in this area.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we heard that we need to increase markets, outside of government, for products manufactured in the NWT; and develop supports for NWT manufacturing beyond the existing Northern Manufacturers Policy.

Mr. Speaker, our engagement process will generally inform our Strategy development. In addition to identifying the challenges, issues and concerns of the NWT's manufacturing sector, our conversations and meetings have confirmed the opportunities and strengths on which we will now build and move forward.

I look forward to sharing a draft of the GNWT's new NWT Manufacturing Strategy with Members in time for our May-June session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.