

GNWT Tourism Investments and Tourism Week

Mr. Speaker, May 27 to June 2 is Tourism Week across Canada.

Tourism Week provides an opportunity to highlight the tourism sector and the economic opportunities that accompany it. Tourism is a key part of the Government of the Northwest Territories commitment to advance regional economic growth and diversification.

This week, events and activities across our territory will bring people together to celebrate the places and experiences that encouraged 100 thousand visitors to join us North of 60 last year.

But, Mr. Speaker, the heart of our booming tourism industry is its people, NWT residents who make visitors feel welcome, and foster our international reputation for friendliness and warmth. This year, the Government of the Northwest Territories, through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is shining a spotlight on these individuals with our NWT Host contest.

The department got a head start on Tourism Week by asking residents across the NWT to nominate people who put the best face on our territory every day by engaging visitors and making them feel welcome.

Our social media feeds have come to life with stories about many NWT residents and what they do to advance our tourism sector.

People like Fred Andrew Jr. from Tulita, who takes pride in sharing stories of the Mountain Dene and their use of the land with visitors.

Hay River's Garry and Linda Carter, whose friendly approach and deep knowledge of the North make their river kayak tours an unforgettable experience.

Ulukhaktok's Patrick Joss, who, according to dozens of Facebook users, is a spectacular ambassador for his region and who makes visitors feel at home as soon as their planes touch down.

Mr. Speaker, we know that it takes more than just recognition to foster a thriving industry. It takes investment.

To this end, we are investing in a number of tourism-related businesses, training and initiatives to support our industry, and ensure there continues to be good news worth celebrating year after year.

Through our destination marketer, NWT Tourism, we will invest over \$3 million to heighten awareness and interest in travel to our territory. In this Canada China Year of Tourism, this includes targeted marketing opportunities in South Asia and our participation in the upcoming federally-led trade mission to Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai.

Our parks are another focal point of investment. This year, we will be spending \$7.2 million to ensure they continue to be world-class. As we move into camping season, visitors will already notice highlights like the new loop at Prelude Lake, and the new

overnight rental structure at Blackstone. Later this summer we will begin construction of lake access roads in Gwich'in Territorial Park.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$1 million in projects designed to attract new visitors, and build on tourism offerings across all five regions; \$200,000, through our Community Tourism Infrastructure Program, to help build transformative tourism infrastructure in small communities; support for Indigenous tourism initiatives to help share our vibrant cultures with the world; and investments to support new opportunities along our Arctic Coast as the road to Tuktoyaktuk and a growing cruise ship sector continue to bring visitors into the far reaches of our North.

Mr. Speaker, the value of our tourism industry has grown from \$94 million in 2010 to \$201 million last year. In the same period, the number of visitors passing through our territory has skyrocketed by more than 40 thousand annually.

This suggests that our investments and efforts to increase tourism is working. This is good news and demonstrates the possibilities as we move towards a broader, more diverse economy. I'm pleased to see these results, and look forward to more success in our territory's second-largest industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.