

Training, Skills Development and Partnerships across the Northwest Territories

Madam Speaker, increasing employment in small communities is an important mandate of our government. This week across Canada, National Skilled Trades and Technology Week will be celebrated as we raise awareness of the many career opportunities in the skilled trades and technology sectors in the Northwest Territories and across Canada. This week, we also honour the 31 Apprenticeship High Mark award recipients and the 36 individuals who have obtained journeyperson certification this year in the Northwest Territories. I want to offer my warm congratulations to all the award recipients on their achievements.

The Department of Education, Culture, and Employment supports the development of a skilled Northern workforce on many levels, including through the delivery of designated trades and occupation certification programs. This year, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to advise you that we have five new members on the Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupation Certification Board to provide advice and link between the department and industry to lead, and are finalizing a promotional campaign to reach out to apprentices and inform them of the many opportunities they can access in our territory. We are also working towards issuing a Blue Seal qualification, which will assist journeypersons in a designated trade or occupation to have their business skills recognized. To further support the Apprenticeship program, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is also moving forward with the Women in Trades Program and Journeyperson Mentorship Program, both of which will be implemented in 2021.

Madam Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment works in collaboration with many partners to seek out and develop opportunities for residents and organizations in small communities. We have established Regional Training Committees to collaborate on joint training and employment initiatives. These typically include regional Indigenous organizations and economic and labour market stakeholders, as well as the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, and Aurora College. There are currently three dynamic Committees in the South Slave, Dehcho and Beaufort Delta, and we are working to establish Training Committees in any other regions that express interest.

Madam Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment actively seeks out opportunities with communities, businesses, and government departments and agencies to offer increased opportunities to NWT residents. One of our key partnerships is with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, through which we are seeking to maximize the use of journeypersons in Local Housing Organizations to target training opportunities for apprentices. Currently, there are more than 30 journeypersons working in communities.

One of the programs we offer is the Small Community Employment Support Program, providing designated community authorities access to annual funding to help address local labour market needs and priorities. From 2018 to April 2020, more than 1,400 jobs have been supported in small communities by this program.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to advise you and this House that to support small communities in addressing the impacts of the pandemic until 2022, designated community authorities can use their funding under the Small Community Employment Support program to hire local residents to assist in addressing any pandemic-related challenge or need.

Madam Speaker, I have some additional good news in relation to our partnership with the Government of Canada. We are currently working with the federal Department of Employment and Social Development Canada to secure new funding to support economic and labour market recovery in the North. I will have more information to provide my colleagues and the public in the near future once more details become available.

Madam Speaker, over the past number of years the department's approach to supporting the labour market and training opportunities in communities across the Northwest Territories has been strategic and collaborative. When the pandemic hit, we mobilized and responded quickly to ensure clients, employers, organizations and community projects were not penalized or impacted financially as a result of changes in the delivery of education or training programs. Training, skills development and education are crucial to the Northwest Territories' economic recovery, and our partners and ourselves have demonstrated we are ready to respond quickly with innovation, consideration and collaboration.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.