



JUN 08 2017

MR. HERBERT NAKIMAYAK  
MLA, NUNAKPUT

**Oral Question 743-18(2): Traditional Harvesting Food Inspection**

This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised on May 25, 2017 regarding the food safety courses and getting local foods into our local stores. I share your interest in promoting locally harvested foods in Northwest Territories (NWT) communities.

The Department of Health and Social Services (Department) is working closely with Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) and Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) to examine how country foods can be sold in various ways in the NWT, including direct sales from the operator/vendor as well as through stores.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) currently has a limited regulatory regime to ensure the safe production and distribution of agricultural products for sale to the public. One area that you have identified is the inspection of foods that carry greater risk of serious human illness, such as meat and dairy. Regulations are needed that provide clearer direction about safe food preparation, packaging, distribution and sale of such high-risk foods.

Regardless of any existing NWT legislation, it is important to keep in mind that all food producers must also comply with federal legislation. For example, the federal government is responsible for the *Meat Inspection Act*, the *Food and Drug Act*, the *Health of Animals Act*, the *Canada Agricultural Products Act* (includes Dairy Products Regulations), the *Packaging and Labeling Act*, and the *Safe Food for Canadians Act*.

However, steps are being taken to amend the NWT's Food Establishment Safety Regulations to more easily permit the sale of locally produced low-risk foods, such as whole fruits and vegetables as well as baked goods. While these amendments are expected to be in place this year, additional work will need to be done to ensure effective regulations for high-risk foods.

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As a result, individuals or businesses wishing to sell locally produced meat and dairy products should contact an Environmental Health Officer well in advance to ensure they are aware of current restrictions and emerging requirements.

We recognize the importance of supporting these types of agricultural activities but need to ensure that the distribution and sale of such items is not putting the health of NWT residents at risk. The Department will continue to work with ITI and ENR with the goal of establishing a robust made-in-the-NWT permitting and inspection process for these types of sales in the next two years.

Thank you.



Glen Abernethy  
Minister of Health and Social Services

c. Honourable Wally Schumann  
Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment

Honourable Robert C. McLeod  
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources

Mr. Tim Mercer  
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. David Hastings  
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