

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MANUFACTURING STRATEGY

March 5 , 2019

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The manufacturing sector is one of the bright lights of the NWT economy. It more than doubled in value from 2014 to 2016 and directly employed 129 people. Let's hope that number has grown as much between 2016 and 2018, despite the fact the sector is still waiting for the government's long-awaited manufacturing strategy. The mandate commitment for manufacturing speaks to expanding the sector, identifying potential areas of growth, promoting and marketing products manufactured in the NWT, and aiding in the professional and technological advancement of the industry. What we need is a detailed plan.

Mr. Speaker, last year, I had the pleasure of travelling to Iceland. I toured a small-scale enterprise called Atlantic Leather. Fishing is big business in Iceland, and for the last 20 years, Atlantic Leather has been buying fish skins from local fish plants. During a three-to four-week process, the skin is cleaned, cured, and dyed every colour of the rainbow. Each skin is uniquely beautiful, with the pattern and texture of the fish clearly visible through the colour. The end result is soft and supple leather that is as sturdy as lamb leather. It is made into ties, buttons, purses, shoes, and other things. The factory sells these goods to tourists, but the biggest market is with the luxury-goods manufacturers such as Prada, Jimmy Choo, Fendi, and Dior.

Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Leather prides itself on its sustainability. All of the material used is a by-product from other industries, such as the food industry. They say the chemicals used in the tannery are as sustainable and environmentally friendly as they can get. As a bonus, the tannery has become a novelty stop for tourists. The staff conduct tours and describe the process of creating the leather. A small shop sells both the leather and the finished goods that they make to both tourists and locals.

Mr. Speaker, our fisheries industry produces a lot of skins, and we could investigate their use for leather, as well. What happens to fish skins that come from the lake now? They are thrown away. Instead, given some business development assistance, it may be possible to create a market for fish leather products.

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of innovation I am hoping for in the long-awaited manufacturing strategy. I will have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Mahsi.