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J. Michael Miltenberger – Update on Partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University

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Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity today to update Members on our partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University on water and cold region research.

This partnership helps support our Government's vision of strong individuals, families and communities sharing the benefits and responsibilities of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous Northwest Territories by insuring we use sound and reliable evidence-based information when developing policy, programs and services.

The purpose of the partnership agreement, signed in May 2010, is to provide new infrastructure and expertise to our Government for environmental research and education; increase our capacity to conduct this research; and, provide training needed to manage natural resources while dealing with the emerging challenges of climate and the impacts of growth and development.

Our Government committed two million dollars to the partnership with one million provided upon signing of the agreement. Annual contributions since then total \$600,000. Our investment has resulted in approximately twelve million dollars in partnership funding.

This investment has allowed the partnership to secure an additional \$5.8 million dollars for research programs in the Northwest Territories with just over \$1.5 million of that spent here.

The partnership is expected to leverage at least another \$5 – 7 million in research funding for NWT programs during the life of the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, there are 10 principal scientists leading research projects in collaboration with communities and residents and involving more than 50 researchers and students. There are also three part-time employees in the Northwest Territories to support these partnership activities.

Two researchers are working with the leaders of the Liidlii Kue First Nations, Jean Marie River First Nation and Sambaa K'e Dene First Nation and the Dehcho First Nations on impacts of thawing permafrost at the Scotty Creek field site near Fort Liard.

Another researcher has provided substantial in-kind support to the Lutsel K'e and Sambaa K'e Dene First Nations and Ecology North by providing wastewater analysis using a relatively simple and inexpensive way to screen water sources for the presence of human faecal matter.

In Wekweëti, local students and Government of Northwest Territories scientists are involved in a project investigating snow characteristics to help calculate snow density using remote sensing. The students conduct snow surveys throughout the winter and their data helps this project and another project where GNWT biologists are working to correlate snow characteristics to caribou health.

Mr. Speaker, other projects include:




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- Permafrost, water and vegetation large scale monitoring being done from Fort Liard to Inuvik to look at the impact of permafrost melt on vegetation.
- Looking at water use in trees, the role of trees in melting permafrost, modeling carbon accumulation in permafrost peat lands and documenting long-term permafrost change using tree growth.
- Terrestrial monitoring of hydrology and water chemistry, looking at sense of place and changing water conditions in Fort Resolution and examining contaminants and hydroecology of the Slave River Delta.

Analysis of much of the research gathered in the Northwest Territories will be done at the Centre for Cold Regions and Water Science on the campus of Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. The grand opening took place two weeks ago, and I was in attendance to see the new facility.

There is also the potential, through our partnership, for NASA to include the Scotty Creek field site and an Inuvik site in its Arctic-Boreal Vulnerability Experiment.

Wilfrid Laurier professors and staff are working with several of our departments to find ways to support NWT-based graduate students in distance learning by offering distance courses, directed studies and appropriate funding opportunities. Mr. Speaker, Wilfrid Laurier University professors and staff are working with several of our departments to find ways to support NWT-based graduate students in distance learning by offering distance courses, directed studies and appropriate funding opportunities.

The Northwest Territories continues to be an important area for scientific research for Aboriginal, federal and territorial governments, boards, agencies and territorial, national and international academic and industry-based researchers and scientists.

Partnerships, like the one with Wilfrid Laurier University, ensure Northwest Territories communities and residents are involved in this research so we benefit from it.

It is my hope that as more young people are exposed to these types of scientific research projects in the physical and social sciences, they will be encouraged to look at professions in this field.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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