

Minister Robert R. McLeod Remarks

Tourism Days Reception February 8-9

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Northwest Territories' Tourism Days. It is a pleasure for me, Mr. Dave Ramsay, MLA for the Yellowknife riding of Kam Lake, and Ms. Jenni Bruce, Chair of NWT Tourism, to be with you tonight as we celebrate our tourism industry. Tourism Days is a partnership between the Government of the Northwest Territories and NWT Tourism and this partnership has resulted in an outstanding lineup of programming here at Canada's Northern House.

I'd also like to recognize some of the Northern operators who made the trip here and who have joined us tonight. Those operators are Mr. Ted Grant, of Simpson Air and the Nahanni Mountain Lodge, and Mr. Don Morin of Aurora Village.

Now some of you – perhaps many of you – are not that familiar with our territory's tourism attractions. So to help drive that message home, I'll use a tactic I think many of you are familiar with.

I'm sure most of you have heard of the American late night talk show host David Letterman and his famous Top 10 lists.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, tonight I am going to try a Top 10 list of my own, and the theme is: "The Top 10 reasons to visit the Northwest Territories". So without further delay, I give you my Top 10 list.

Reason # 10 – It's spectacular.

In the Northwest Territories you can experience things that are beyond belief, yet within reach. You can dip your toe in the Arctic Ocean. You can see muskox, polar bears and other rare wildlife. You can wear sunglasses at night – and you'll actually need them. You can scramble up an Arctic pingo. It's all here in the Naturally Spectacular Northwest Territories.

The # 9 reason to visit the NWT – you can walk on water

Okay, I admit it's frozen water, but in the NWT, winter travelling takes on a whole new experience when you drive on our ice roads. Built over tundra, lakes and rivers, these are the roads some of you have seen on the *Ice Road Truckers* reality TV series. Our tourism operators will take you on them and explain how they serve as an important transportation link for our Northern communities during the winter months. Just don't get spooked when the ice cracks beneath your feet.

Reason # 8 to visit the NWT – Experience the Midnight Sun

Our summers might be short, but the good news is you can jam in twice the activity in half the time because it doesn't really get dark in June and July. Want to go for a paddle on a calm northern lake at 2 a.m.? In the NWT, you can do it. Want to golf at

midnight? No problem. The NWT is the Land of the Midnight Sun and you can do whatever you want, whenever you want. The sun will still be shining.

Reason # 7 to visit the NWT – You'll never talk about the one that got away

Cold, clear and teeming, our lakes and rivers offer some of the world's most spectacular sports fishing. You won't go home empty handed and there's a good chance you will land a trophy-sized trout, Arctic char, northern pike or Arctic grayling.

The # 6 reason to visit the Northwest Territories – Wide open spaces

If you have a yen to hit the open road, the NWT is the place for you. There are no four-lane highways with bumper-to-bumper traffic here. And you'll likely see more four-legged creatures during your travels than four-wheel vehicles. Drive the Dempster Highway. Travel the Deh Cho Connection. Along the way there is camping, beautiful scenery such as waterfalls and hiking opportunities galore.

Reason #5 to visit the NWT – We like to party

Along with being the Land of the Midnight Sun, the NWT is the Land of Festivals. Whether it is the South Slave Friendship Music Festival in the summer or the Muskrat Jamboree in the spring, northerners love an excuse to have a good time. Visit the Northwest Territories and get in on the fun.

My #4 reason to visit the NWT – Our picture perfect parks

Our territorial and national parks are among the best in the world. The Nahanni National Park Reserve was named a World Heritage Site in 1978. Wood Buffalo National Park is Canada's largest park. And Tuktut Nogait (TOOK-TUT NOG-GUIDE) National Park is one of the remotest parks anywhere. Visit our parks and go where no man, woman or even caribou has gone before.

Reason #3 to visit the NWT – It's like going to the zoo, but with no admission fee.

If you want to experience wildlife where it should be – in the wild – the Northwest Territories is an ideal destination. You can spot songbirds, geese and ducks by the thousands nesting on tundra and lakes. You can see bison, foxes and bears on the side of the road. If you are quiet enough you might even see a lynx, a moose or a caribou herd. The wildlife you can see is as varied as it is numerous.

Reason #2 to visit the NWT – Watch the greatest light show on Earth.

From late August till April, the aurora borealis – or the northern lights – light up our northern skies with dancing waves of glowing lights that range in colours of yellow, lavender, silver, green and red. Visitors come from around the world to catch a glimpse

of the aurora because the Northwest Territories is one of the best locations in the world to see them.

And my #1 reason to come visit the Northwest Territories – the people

Our territory is the home of the Dene, Inuvialuit and Métis Aboriginal peoples. In many of our small communities, traditional ways of life and customs are still practised everyday. In the Northwest Territories, you can still experience life the way it was lived long ago. Visit our vibrant communities and meet our friendly people. They will be eager to share their history, their language and their culture with you.

Ladies and gentlemen, the tourism industry is a vital part of the NWT's economy. Each year approximately 73,000 people visit our territory and the industry contributes over \$116 million to the economy. But with a land mass of 1.2 million square kilometres and just over 42,000 residents residing in it, we have plenty of room for more of you.

And while I've just given you 10 reasons why you should visit the Northwest Territories, I could have easily given 100 more. But I'll leave it that, in the hopes that I've turned your attention northward and that you'll consider a visit to the Northwest Territories. We'd love to have you.

Thank you and enjoy the rest of the reception.

