

Government Orders

aboriginal businesses across Canada operating in all sectors of the economy.

In my province of Saskatchewan, for instance, there are over 700 aboriginal owned and operated businesses enjoying tremendous economic success, doing well in the economy of Saskatchewan and indeed all of Canada. They provide employment to aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, paying the government tax revenue and all of the good things that go with sustained economic growth.

These aboriginal enterprises include industry firms, transportation and construction companies, retail and service outlets, manufacturing operations, management consultants, computer companies, arts and crafts enterprises, tourist outfitters and recreation oriented businesses.

Aboriginal businesses are also taking advantage of opportunities in new markets, such as authentic aboriginal tourism products which involve a combination of facilities and experiences that are uniquely aboriginal, experiences which are sought by many people from many nations.

Market research by the government indicates that authentic aboriginal tourism products have the potential to generate revenues of \$1.6 billion annually in the Canadian economy. Not only will this benefit the aboriginal business but all businesses and enterprises across this nation.

Aboriginal business development is gathering momentum as First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples seek to gain control of their economic destinies. In a 1991 survey of aboriginal people, more than 18,000 respondents indicated that they own or operate a business and 34,000 others indicated their intention to start a business within two years.

Aboriginal people are proving to be astute business people. An independent study of 292 aboriginal firms that received financial assistance from Industry Canada revealed that 90 per cent of those firms were operating after two years. These businesses have proven to be good sources of employment for aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians alike. Of the 2,122 jobs created or maintained with support from Industry Canada, 1,486 were held by aboriginal people and 636 by non-aboriginal people.

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In addition to the business ventures I mentioned earlier, which are a direct result of land claims, there are many other examples of successful aboriginal entrepreneurship.

In Saskatchewan the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, which represents nine First Nations, was the winner of the 1995 prestigious Aboriginal Economic Developer of the Year Award. The tribal council has developed an impressive economic devel-

opment strategy that sets out a tremendous range of activities. Already a forestry company owned by the tribal council has generated 240 direct jobs.

In La Ronge, Saskatchewan, Kitsaki Development Corporation has business enterprises which gross over \$30 million a year and provide well in excess of 250 full time jobs for aboriginal and non-aboriginal people alike.

In The Pas, Manitoba the Opaskwayak Cree Nation owns seven profitable businesses and is developing more. The latest venture is an \$8 million, 70,000 square foot hotel complex that will open in 1996. Another organization of Manitoba First Nations, the Southeast Resource Development Council recently opened a plant that will manufacture windows and doors for the nine First Nations in southeastern Alberta.

Next year the first aboriginal owned hydroelectric plant in Canada will open in the Northwest Territories. The \$26 million Cascades station will be owned by the Dogrib Power Corporation and most of the 100 jobs created by the plant will go to local Dogrib people.

In Quebec the Mohawk Trading Company in Kanatake markets office supplies, equipment, computers, software and furniture to a wide range of clients including federal departments, corporations like Pepsi-Cola and Colgate-Palmolive.

On the east coast the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation has signed a multi-million dollar contract to mine and export rare anorthosite crystal to Italy.

We are witnessing an increase in the entrepreneurial partnerships between aboriginal people and mainstream business communities. Such partnerships, joint ventures and strategic business alliances are essential if the aboriginal community is to capitalize on opportunities throughout the economy.

In northern Ontario, for example, the Mussel White Mine Development project involves an agreement between Placer Dome Mining and four First Nations. Under this agreement 60 jobs will be created at the mine site. The Long Lake First Nation in northern Ontario has also negotiated an agreement that provides for employment, job training and opportunities with Long Lac Forest Products: Buchanan Brothers. This agreement has resulted in 65 jobs for First Nations people.

Despite the impediment of unresolved land claims, British Columbia First Nations are also pursuing business opportunities. Since June 1995, for example, the Skeetchestn First Nation and the Chai-Na-Ta Corporation have been working together to grow ginseng on 544 acres of reserve land in the Kamloops area for export to China and Hong Kong. In return for providing financing and land for the project, the First Nation anticipates approximately 300 jobs and more than \$14 million in profits over the 10-year agreement.