

MEMBER'S STATEMENT– GREAT SLAVE– FEBRUARY 10, 2009

**CENTRE FOR NORTHERN FAMILIES'**

**WELCOME CENTRE FOR IMMIGRANTS PROGRAM**

In recent years, the North has seen an increased immigrant population. Around 160 cultural groups are represented in Yellowknife, but only 3 visible minorities have registered cultural organizations in the City.

Mr. Speaker, although people from different ethnic communities may organize themselves informally, they have common needs and areas of concern.

The Centre for Northern Families' has offered a Welcome Centre for Immigrants Program for two years, in an effort to help immigrants transition to a new country and community, and to ensure immigrants have access to services and the opportunity to achieve and maintain social and economic independence. Mr. Speaker, in the short life of this program, the Centre has helped 157 people from 29 different countries.

The services available in the Welcome Centre focus on providing information, immigration consultation, work place orientation and job coaching, English language classes, computer classes and social networking programs that help new Canadians integrate into the community and the Northwest Territories. The Centre's activities help people adjust to their new community and country. The Director herself is an immigrant, giving the Programs a distinct advantage of being run by

someone with firsthand experience of the needs and challenges experienced by new Canadians.

The Centre is open Monday to Friday from 9AM to 9PM to accommodate varied work and family schedules and strives to be as accessible as possible. The Centre is open to all immigrants with specific programs for youth and adults (both women and men). The Centre for Northern Families is interested in providing outreach to the regional hubs of Hay River and Inuvik to help those regions support immigrants there.

Mr. Speaker, the Centre for Northern Families wants to work with the GNWT to build effective programs and services to welcome newcomers and help them transition into life in the NWT and Canada and expand upon the services they currently provide. Unfortunately, the lease at the existing multicultural facility ends this month, and if it is not renewed, the Centre will be forced to close its doors. They need government support. If they shut down it will be a loss to our community and the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I have some questions for the Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

## **Questions:**

Mr. Speaker, these questions are for the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

1. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the federal government is transferring \$600,000 to the GNWT for the purpose of supporting immigrants and new Canadians transition into their new communities and country. For the last two years, the Centre for Northern Families has run a similar service, on minimal funding, but with a proven success rate. The Centre for Northern Families submitted a proposal to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for approximately \$200,000 (1/3 of the total new money offered by the Federal Government) which, I believe, was not supported. Will the Minister commit to reviewing that proposal and working with the Centre for Northern Families to build upon their existing program and support immigrants using the new money from the Federal government?
2. In just over two weeks the doors of the Welcome Centre will be closing. This will be a significant loss to the new immigrants coming to the NWT. To ensure continuity of support, will the Minister commit to provide funding to the Centre for Northern Families prior to February 28, 2009, so that they will be able to extend their lease and continue to provide services to new Canadians from their existing facility?
3. The Centre's proposal includes a component to reach out to the communities of Hay River and Inuvik, and work to help establish services for recent immigrants there. Will the Minister commit to working with the Centre For Northern Families to provide outreach services to those regions of the Northwest Territories?