

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – FEBRUARY 11, 2009

SideDoor Youth Ministries

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the SideDoor Youth Ministries, and the good work it is doing for the people of the Northwest Territories. Now in its 14th year, the Sidedoor provides shelter and a safe haven for over 15'000 youth annually.

SideDoor began in 1995 in the basement of the Anglican church in Yellowknife, as a hang out for youth who would otherwise be on the streets. Since then it has grown, and now offers a number of programs from its own facility on the corner of 49th Avenue and 49th Street. Its programs serve young people from ages 5 - 19.

The Sidedoor's programs address the need for services for youth ages 16-19, who, too old for child welfare and too young for social assistance, tend to fall through the cracks. The caring and dedicated staff has a passion for youth who struggle in our community. The Sidedoor is open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. It offers one on one counselling, laundry, showers and a place for youth to stay overnight. It enforces a zero tolerance drug and alcohol policy, and homeless youth are strongly encouraged to seek employment and develop skills to help them live independently.

Junior Sidedoor is a free, after school daycare service for children 5-13, that provides kids with snacks, structured and free time activities and a warm, supervised place to play. Summer day-camps offer recreational activities to children free of charge.

The Sidedoor's programs are preventative in nature, giving young people a constructive alternative to the streets, crime, or ending up in police custody when what they really need is food and a safe place to rest. The Sidedoor provides safe shelter, emotional support and increases the health and dignity of downcast and victimized youth.

Mr. Speaker, the Sidedoor is located in Yellowknife, but regularly welcomes youth from all across the territory. It is the only youth drop-in centre of its kind in our region. The programs and services are effective, and most importantly, have gained the confidence of youth themselves. The Sidedoor is taking care of our young people, and they are shaping our future. I would like to thank and applaud them for their dedication to our youth. They are appreciated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker