

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – FEBRUARY 23, 2009

**YWCA OF YELLOWKNIFE**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today I wish to draw the attention of the House to the significant contributions that the YWCA of Yellowknife makes to the Northwest Territories and their effort to increase the well-being and independence of some of the North's most vulnerable people.

The YWCA provides emergency and transitional housing, family violence prevention programs and community support services, as well as after school programs at six Yellowknife schools and the Taiga Adventure Camp for young women.

The YWCA is an NWT-wide resource. It operates the Sutherland House in Fort Smith, which is a shelter for women and children fleeing violence. The YWCA's programs that help children deal with the impact of family violence are delivered in a number of northern communities.

The Allison MacAteer House is a 12-bed crisis shelter in Yellowknife for women and children up to age 16 who are victims of domestic violence. The shelter offers a safe place for abused women and children as well as numerous support and counselling programs. The YWCA will also assist in issuing emergency protection orders.

Additionally, the YWCA operates Rockhill Apartments in the Great Slave riding offering both emergency and transitional housing units. It is a key

resource for homeless families. Most of the residents are often single mothers, but there are also single fathers and close to 140 children. It also operates four supportive housing homes that provide life skills, training, community inclusion and a 24-hour in-home support for adults with intellectual disabilities or chronic psychiatric illness.

The Taiga Adventure Camp, currently operating out of Fort Smith, is a summer camp providing girls from ages 12 to 17 with a fun, positive personal growth experience. The camp helps develop life skills that carry well beyond the summer months and teenage years.

Invited north in 1966 by the Commissioner with the original mandate to provide housing, the YWCA has since broadened its outreach to meet the needs of our communities. Ninety-five percent of people who access the YWCA services are aboriginal. It is the lead agency on pan-territorial research on homelessness in northern women.

The YWCA's challenges are great not only to meet the needs of its clientele but also to secure funding for their staff and keep the facilities in good repair. The YWCA is in an excellent relationship with its funders and a broad donor base in the northern business community. However, staff at the YWCA make only 60 percent of a typical government salary, which contributes to the high turnover and constant need for staff training. It also highlights the dedication and perseverance of its long-time workers and volunteers.

The YWCA has been an important part of our community and a turning point for northern families for over 40 years. Mr. Speaker, I ask Members of this House and the public to join me in offering support and wishing them continued success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.