

**STAFF VOLUNTEER FOR AWG**

Mr. Speaker, the 2008 Arctic Winter Games are rapidly approaching. We have roughly three weeks before athletes begin to descend upon Yellowknife and the N.W.T. By all accounts these games are going to be huge and will be good for the city of Yellowknife and the N.W.T. as a whole.

To make these games a success, it's going to take a significant amount of time and effort from all parties: the Arctic Winter Games staff, the city of Yellowknife, the G.N.W.T., the many sponsors and, most importantly, the volunteers. In fact, to run the games approximately 2,500 volunteers will be required.

To ensure that the games are a success, the Arctic Winter Games has requested that the government allow G.N.W.T staff – about 60 people in key roles – time off for the week of the games. In addition, they requested that additional staff registered as volunteers with the games office be allowed to leave at 3 p.m. without penalty when they are scheduled as a volunteer for 4 p.m. I would like to applaud the government for allowing the 60 volunteers in key roles up to eight working days per year to participate. This goes a long way in helping deliver a successful games.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Human Resources has declined the second request. The department has indicated that any additional G.N.W.T volunteers must liquidate annual leave or lieu time if they wish to participate. This limits the number of volunteers as well as complicates scheduling. This direction is directly contrary to the decision made in 1998 when the games were last held in Yellowknife. At that time staff were allowed to leave at 3 p.m. when scheduled to do a voluntary duty at 4 p.m., without affecting their personal leave credits.

This year's rigid and shortsighted application of their policies is not in the best interest of the G.N.W.T. staff or the games as a whole. Supporting dedicated staff who are willing to contribute their time is in the best interest of the community and the North, and is worth the investment. Let's work with staff and the Arctic Winter Games to ensure that the games run smoothly and are representative of the N.W.T. and those of us who are proud to call it our home. Let's reduce the paperwork, let's support our staff, and let's support the games.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I'll be asking the Minister of Human Resources questions concerning their rigid application of their polies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.