

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – JUNE 10, 2008

**RETURN TO SERVICE BURSARY PROGRAM RECIPIENTS**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of our Strategic Plan, we talk a lot about maximizing northern employment, encouraging northern youth to go out, get educated and come back to the Northwest Territories.

I'd like to applaud both the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Health and Social Services, who have combined to create a bursary program for nurses, doctors and allied health professionals — a Return of Service bursary program which provides students in these studies with money with the expectation that upon successful graduation and their completion, they'll return to the North and work in their field of study.

A lot of students from the Northwest Territories have received these dollars, and it has helped them complete their studies successfully. All good. All great. The problem is not all of the students return to the Northwest Territories. Many students, once they've completed their studies, especially students in medicine and some of the more advanced health and allied professions, choose to remain in the south. This is after the government has given them up to \$70,000 during the duration of their studies.

Unfortunately, the government hasn't been that active in collecting those dollars back, and as a result, we have students out there who have received large sums of money who have no intention of returning to the Northwest Territories who also are keeping the money that they are provided. Now, I understand that some have volunteered to pay it back, but others have remained silent and have left the Territories and have not been charged back.

I would like to see this government, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Human Resources, track down these individuals who have taken this money in good faith and have not returned their service. I would like to see the government track these individuals down and encourage them to return to the North to meet the Return of Service obligation and/or collect the dollars from these individuals. We gave the money to them in good

faith; I think it's time that we turned around and collected those dollars from those individuals who have not met their obligation and have no intention of returning to the Northwest Territories. We're talking possibly hundreds of thousands of dollars, and in time of fiscal restraint every penny counts. I think it's time to go get those monies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.