

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – JUNE 3, 2009

**YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIAN ALEX SMITH'S MEMBER'S STATEMENT**  
**– YOUTH HOMLESSNESS –**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

during the week of April 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, the Legislative Assembly and the Speaker hosted the youth Parliament. It was great meeting these young northerners and listen to them make their member's statements and debate their issues on the floor of this House during the official youth parliament. I believe that all of the participants should be applauded for their involvement and all of their hard work.

During the actual session, I was quite pleased to see that many of the Member's Statements were very timely and raised concerns that are very real to residents of the Northwest Territories. I was very happy to hear the Member's Statement from the youth parliamentarian from Great Slave, Mr. Alex Smith. His statement was as follows:

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*Today I'd like to bring up the issue and concerns of youth homelessness. The concern I have with youth homelessness doesn't affect just Yellowknife, it affects everywhere in the NWT. Once youth age out of foster care at 16, they have nowhere to go and no support until the age of 19. Still, they have very limited support, when between the ages of 16 to 19, Yellowknife and NWT residents are forced to live in underfunded shelters, friends' houses or in the worst circumstances, they have to live on the streets.*

*These shelters these youth run to consist of the Sutherland House in Fort Smith, the Family Support Center in Hay River and the Side Door in Yellowknife. There are also more shelters across the NWT but still very little help to support the smaller communities. All these shelters are underfunded and can only do so much.*

*When these youth have nowhere to run, they turn to drugs and alcohol because they think it will fix their problems. We need to help these youth who are in need because they are our future.*

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I would like to thank Alex for his statement on an issue that needs to be dealt with. Youth aged 16 to the age of majority seem to have slipped through the cracks of this Government. Once they are too old to receive non-voluntary support through the Child and Family Services Act and before they are eligible for income support, these youth are left to the fend for themselves as Alex outlined.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue. At the appropriate time, I will be asking the Minister of Health and Social Services some question on the topic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.