

VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2005, the 15th Assembly released a declaration on volunteering which demonstrated the government's commitment to work with organizations that represent the diversity of the voluntary sector and support the voluntary sector through active partnerships and leadership on such programs as the NWT Volunteer Support Initiative, which is the VSI, and the related finance action group.

Volunteering in organizations within the voluntary sector supports community wellness and helps all northerners build the kind of communities that we all want to live in, for both families and individuals. Through the voluntary sector, people have the ability to come together, take action, and come up with solutions to the common problems that improve the quality of life for all residents of the Northwest Territories.

The sector is broad and includes voluntary organizations, which support the arts and culture, actively engage youth and adults in organized sport, and provide social programming to northerners in need and/or crisis. The sector includes organizations that are purely volunteer-based, as well as non-government organizations, which employ staff in order to provide administration and respond to the wishes of their membership. All add to the strength of communities. Given the nature of the sector organizations within it are able to respond to community and individual needs far quicker than the government.

As part of the government's declaration, it was recognized that helping others is a shared tradition of northerners and that open, informed, and sustained dialogue with the NWT voluntary sector was, and is, required between the sector and government. As such, in compliance with the government's commitment to support the voluntary sector, the GNWT appointed the Minister of MACA as the Minister responsible for addressing voluntary sector issues and accounting for the NWT VSI. Unfortunately, although MACA has

done some work with the Voluntary Support Initiative and the finance action group, the sector continues to struggle and their ability to provide services to meet local needs and advocate for the marginalized and under-represented individual groups and their cause is being compromised.

Many of the organizations within the sector feel that the lack of progress may be related to the lack of the GNWT staff dedicated to this area, as well as the lack of government-wide approach on supporting the sector itself.

Further, they feel that some of these challenges may be overcome by assigning the responsibility, mandate and accountability for implementing the government's commitment to the Executive under one Minister.

Mr. Speaker, later this afternoon I'll be asking the Premier some questions regarding the effectiveness of having the responsibility for the voluntary sector under the Department of MACA and how the government intends to move forward in order to provide the support committed to the voluntary sector in March 2005. Thank you.