

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – November 29, 2007

SUPPORT FOR THE NORTHERN ARTS SECTOR

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to add to Mr. Hawkins' Member's statement made yesterday on the arts. Specifically, I'd like to talk about the disconnect I perceive between the support provided by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to artists and the lack of follow-up with these artists, whether they are musicians, painters, writers, sculptors, or involved in crafts, by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, who may be able to partner with these artists to promote the NWT and strengthen tourism across the Northwest Territories. If we give people a reason to come to the Northwest Territories, they will come. Arts and culture are certainly a draw which should not be ignored.

Currently, Education, Culture and Employment provides grants to northern artists through the NWT Arts Council. Although the support provided is significantly lower than other jurisdictions, such as the Yukon, and should be increased, they do help. A large number of northern artists have taken advantage of the program. There are books; there are CDs and other impressive projects that are completed that are available for public consumption. Once produced, the only requirement from Education, Culture and Employment is that the artist provide some sort of public showing. After that, there is no continued relationship between the artist and the GNWT.

Rather than miss this opportunity to provide continued support to the artists and to increase awareness of the NWT arts scene, which can certainly enhance tourism, I believe that the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment should work together and share information on these different artists. The two departments should break down their silos and work together for the mutual benefit for tourism, benefit for the arts, benefit for the North and all of its people.

I'll be asking the Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment and the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment questions on this topic during question period. It's time that we worked together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.