

Performing Arts

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about performing artists in the NWT. Performing artists fall into a number of categories including actors, musicians, dancers, and the list goes on and on.

To begin, I believe this 16th Legislative Assembly has done a good thing in increasing our support to the Arts in the NWT. Our budget in this area has increased by almost \$2 million since we began in October 2007. This is a positive step and acknowledges the value the Arts play within the NWT. However, with respect to performing artists such as musicians, I don't believe that we are taking advantage of the good work that has been done. We haven't taken the steps required and formed partnerships with our Northern musicians to promote themselves and the Northwest Territories at the same time. Through ECE we provide money to Northern musicians (who apply) to help them produce their music. Once produced, this government is done with the Artists. There is no follow-up. There is no further cooperation or partnering. This is a missed opportunity. I believe that the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment should work with Education, Culture and Employment to identify these musicians and see if they can find ways to work with them, in a mutually beneficial way, to promote the NWT as a tourist destination.

I have looked through the GNWT Arts Strategy as presented by ITI. There is only one brief mention of performing artists. The majority of the focus is on commodities such as crafts. Northern musicians produce a product and are a commodity in and of themselves. ITI should pay greater attention to the performing artists as part of their Arts Strategy.

I have also spent a lot of time reviewing our Spectacular NWT campaign. Once again, I'm sad to report that there is very little reference to the Arts, including performing artists as a reason for people to come and experience the NWT. When people consider coming to a place like the NWT they want to have options and a wide variety of things to do. Attending Arts festivals and other music related events is a definite draw.

Mr. Speaker later this afternoon I will be asking the Minister responsible for ITI some questions on this topic and seeking a commitment of this Government to work with performing artists from the Northwest Territories to promote the NWT and the artists themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.