

MEMBERS STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – OCTOBER 9, 2008

ENHANCED FUNDING FOR THE ARTS

Thank you Mr. Speaker,

Today I would like to highlight the work of artists and crafts people in the Great Slave riding, and commend the government on its recent commitment to enhance funding up to \$500,000 for the Arts as outlined by the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment yesterday.

This money will go to the NWT Arts Council; to cultural organizations, such as the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre, to heritage centres where northern arts and crafts are showcased, and to new program planning, development and evaluation throughout the NWT. As an avid supporter of the Arts and Culture I am happy to see this government taking these steps and look forward to continued and enhanced investment in these areas over the years to come and continued partnerships between Education, Culture and Employment and Industry Tourism and Investment.

The Great Slave riding is home to many artists whose creative work provides just a small cross section of artistic talent in our territory. Knifemaker Edward McRae, photographers Alice McLeod and Bronwyn Watters live in the riding, as well as musicians Moira Cameron and Steven Goff of Ceilidh and Friends. The Great Slave Riding is also the home of Bill Gilday of the Gumboots; visual artists Rae Braden; and painter Brian McDonald. Bonnie Madsen's murals can be seen on Franklin Avenue, and she also operates a gallery out of her home in the riding which showcases her excellent paintings.

The many accomplishments of constituent Kiera Kolson, a hip hop artist and aboriginal youth advocate, show that home grown artists are capable of great achievement alongside their counterparts to the south.

The Northern Arts and Cultural Centre is the only performing arts centre in the Northwest Territories. Located in the Great Slave riding, NACC continues to host local, territorial, national and international talent and is an integral part of the territorial arts community. Many young northerners have discovered a love of performing arts there, and many performers have inspired audiences to pursue their creative goals. The enhanced funding will support a proposal to administer a new Northern Theatre Arts program, and I look forward to the opportunities this initiative will offer northerners.

The Northwest Territories' arts community has great potential and continues to grow. However, as artists in any discipline can tell you, success requires hard work, perseverance and support. We as a Government must be sure to encourage the development of northern talent and continue to offer emerging artists as many opportunities as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment for his Departments commitment to the Arts. Creativity is a renewable resource and few groups of people celebrate our unique northern culture and identity as vibrantly as our artists.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.