

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY NEWS RELEASES

2002

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02-24	Oct 28	Nitah to attend the Halifax Kyoto Accord Conference.
02-25	Nov 28	Stanton cleanout gets it (mostly) right, says Braden.
02-26	Dec 18	Inuvik Twin Lakes MLA applauds recent merger in Inuvik.

January 15, 2002

For Immediate Release

14th Assembly Caucus to Examine Process to Rename the Northwest Territories

The Caucus of the NWT Legislative Assembly will soon consider recommendations for a process to rename the Northwest Territories.

The Honourable Jim Antoine, Member for Nahendeh, and Bill Braden, MLA for Great Slave, have been entrusted by the Members to bring recommendations back to Caucus in February on a process for renaming the territory. "Our job is to identify options to recommend to Caucus regarding possible processes for choosing and ratifying a new name for the NWT that recognizes and better reflects our identity today," said Mr. Antoine

The assignment, discussed during Caucus meetings in December and again this month, builds on efforts by the 13th Assembly to define the new NWT after the creation of Nunavut in 1999. "We are a new territory, and we need to be able to declare for ourselves, for the rest of Canada, and the world who we are and how we wish to be recognized and represented," said Mr. Braden. "In fact, our recommendations to Caucus may include other symbols we present to the world, such as our flag and coat of arms."

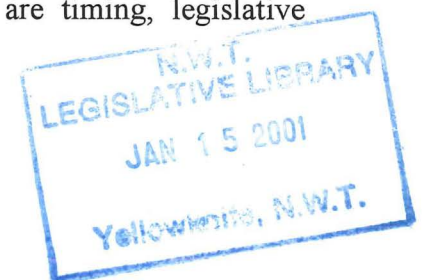
In particular, the Special Committee on Western Identity of the previous Assembly in its report of September 1999 recommended that its work on a new flag and coat of arms be continued by the 14th Assembly, a task that has not yet been undertaken.

Mr. Braden and Mr. Antoine will examine the work done by the previous Assembly, Nunavut's experience, and more recently, those of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, in formulating their recommendations. Other factors to be considered are timing, legislative impacts, and the costs and benefits.

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February 19, 2002

For Immediate Release

Name Change Not To Be Pursued

Caucus of the 14th Legislative Assembly today decided not to pursue the issue of a change of name for the Northwest Territories. "While the issue of identity for the Northwest Territories remains, Members felt their constituents had communicated to them that other priorities should prevail at the present time," said MLAs Bill Braden, and Jim Antoine, who were assigned by Caucus to look at process options.

Members agreed that the development and entrenchment of a new name and symbols for the North were processes, which evolve over time and a change in the name of the territory should be more appropriately linked to milestones such as self-government, devolution and any resulting constitutional changes.

While the change of name issue will not proceed, Members are free to continue an informal dialogue on the achievement of an appropriate northern identity.

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March 15, 2002

For Immediate Release

Social Programs Committee Tables Response to Health and Social Services Action Plan

The Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Programs yesterday tabled its response to the Department of Health and Social Services Action Plan aimed at the revitalization of the Health and Social Services System.

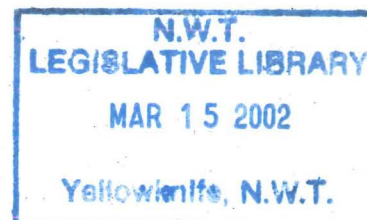
Standing Committee Deputy Chairman, and MLA for North Slave, Mr. Leon Lafferty stated, "In many of our past reports and in correspondence with previous Ministers, the Committee had recommended similar actions to the Department of Health and Social Services." In most respects the Committee is generally supportive of the directions outlined in the Action Plan, but has concerns in some areas.

"The Committee highlights the need for elected, rather than appointed Board memberships and chairs," said Brendan Bell, MLA for Yellowknife South. "We also feel that there is a critical need for significant investment system-wide to improve the quality of information at the fingertips of health and social services professionals.

Other Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs are Charles Dent, MLA Frame Lake, Bill Braden, MLA Great Slave, and Hay River South MLA, Jane Groenewegen.

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March 22, 2002

For Immediate Release

Public Hearings to be held in Yellowknife to Review the Official Languages Act

The Legislative Assembly's Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act will be conducting public hearings in Yellowknife on Tuesday, March 26 and Wednesday, March 27.

The Committee wants to learn the views of the public on the legislation that grants legal rights and regulates the delivery of many government services in any of the 11 official languages of the NWT.

“Public input is crucial to ensure that we identify any changes and recommendations to the Act or related policies that may be necessary to better meet the public’s needs,” said Chair, Steve Nitah, MLA, Tu Nedhe.

The public hearings begin on Tuesday, March 26th from 10:00am to 3:00pm and on Wednesday, March 27 from 9:00am – 5:00pm. The public hearings will take place in Committee Room “A” in the Legislative Assembly building in Yellowknife, with the exception of a videoconference with Canada’s Commissioner of Official Languages. This will take place on the morning of Wednesday, March 27, from 9:00am to 10:00am on the 7th Floor of the Centre Square Building. Following the videoconference the hearing will resume in Committee Room “A” at the Legislative Assembly.

Several interested individuals and organizations will be appearing before the committee, a schedule has been attached.

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May 1, 2002

For Immediate Release

Trust Fund established by Sandy Lee, MLA Range Lake

Sandy Lee, MLA Range Lake, created the WIP (Women in Politics) Trust Fund with the funds she will receive from MLA's Supplementary Pension.

Anyone running for an elected seat will tell you that it is very expensive and often difficult to raise money for a campaign. This is especially so for first time women candidates. Ms. Lee also wants to highlight the need for more women to seek elected office at all levels. "We need to have more women running if we hope to increase the number of women being elected. Presently there is one woman on the eight member City Council, and only two women out of the 19 members of the Legislative Assembly, this is just not acceptable," stated Ms. Lee. By opting into the supplementary benefit Ms. Lee will have access to money that would otherwise be gaining interest but untouchable.

During the February-March Session of the Legislative Assembly, Ms. Lee was a strong opponent to Bill 7, *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act and the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act* because it would increase Members Pension. Even so, the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories passed it in March 2002.

Ms. Lee has decided to opt into the plan and put the accumulating money into a trust fund to help encourage more women to run for political office. "If I didn't opt into the plan my portion of the fund would just sit there so I decided to put the money to good use," said Ms. Lee.

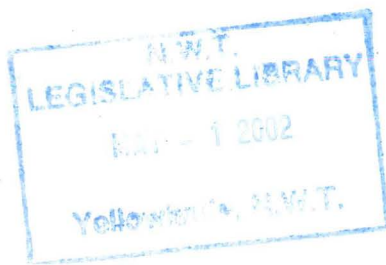
The purpose of the WIP Fund is to assist any woman ordinarily resident in Yellowknife, to defray costs of running for elected office. The WIP Fund may be awarded to a Yellowknife woman running for the first time for any school board or education authority, municipal council, territorial electoral riding, or for any federal electoral.

"The foremost objective of this Fund is to promote and foster the continued involvement of more women in politics," stated Ms. Lee.

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North Slave MLA says Ottawa lobby does not represent the Dogrib region

Yellowknife, NT(May 10, 2002) – The MLA for North Slave says the Premier and the Finance Minister's plan to lobby the federal government for infrastructure money will not benefit the Dogrib region.

"By adopting a strategy to develop a road to resources off the Ingraham Trail, I feel that Cabinet has misled Members, the Public and Aboriginal Leaders throughout the Territories," says Lafferty.

The Member from the North Slave is deeply concerned about the way in which a route for the road to resources has been chosen. "For the past few years, I have been assured in both the House and in Ministerial correspondence that no route has been chosen and that none will be chosen without public consultation."

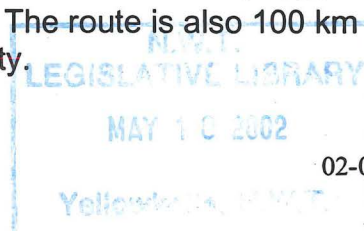
Lafferty points out that the Premier issued a press release on December 8, 2000, stating that he looked forward to a full dialogue with the Dogrib on the alignment of a road to resources in the future. This never occurred.

Lafferty was startled in late April when he read in the local paper the Finance Minister's announcement that Cabinet would lobby for infrastructure dollars to improve the Ingraham Trail. This would establish an all-weather route to the mines, despite it only being used for six-weeks of the year.

"The government's own engineering studies show that it is more cost effective to build a road connecting the Dogrib communities going to the mines than following the Ingraham Trail route," says Mr. Lafferty. He adds that construction costs along the Ingraham Trail have been as high as \$2.5 million/km whereas studies show that using the Dogrib route will only cost 1/10th of that amount - \$250,000 dollars per/km.

"I can't understand why no consideration is given to the long-term social, environmental and economic benefits that could result from an all-weather road linking the Dogrib communities and extending to the mines," says Lafferty.

A winter road already exists that connects the Dogrib communities. This road could be developed in stages into an all-weather road. The route is also 100 km shorter for truckers which could enhance motorist safety.





Lafferty states that the government is making a big mistake going to Ottawa without including the Dogrib communities in its plans for infrastructure development. He says that the costs and benefits of either route were not taken into consideration when a decision was made to lobby for these dollars.

The Members from North Slave knows that by building a road through the Dogrib region, the government would do more than improve access to the mines: it would help spread economic wealth, expand hydro power, reduce greenhouse gases and build a stronger territory.

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May 16, 2002

For Immediate Release

CRISIS LOOMING IN NWT HEALTHCARE

Rapid change in demographics among NWT residents is overloading today's health care system and will drive it into crisis in a few years time, says the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Social Programs.

"Residents are living longer, and more long-time Northerners are choosing to stay in the NWT," said Committee Chair Brendan Bell in a presentation today to the Romanow Commission on Health Care in Canada.

"The need to increase capacity coupled with new costs imposed by major mining and pipeline projects, means the NWT will not be able to sustain an adequate level of care without new resources," said Mr. Bell.

The Committee, which oversees the NWT government social program departments, also advised the Commission that conventional, per-capita federal funding models just don't work in remote regions like the NWT.

Mr. Bell underlined the urgent need to invest new strategic money and support into preventative and restorative programs that will help every resident make good decisions about their own lifestyle choices.

For more information:

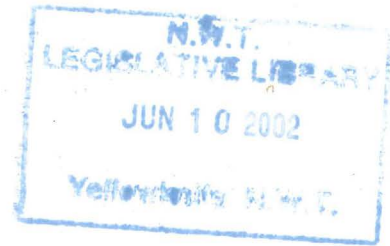
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Northwest
Territories Legislative Assembly

Member for Yellowknife South



June 10, 2002

For Immediate Release

BELL TO LEAD DISCUSSION ON CURBING CORRUPTION IN SMALL JURISDICTIONS

Yellowknife South MLA Brendan Bell is in England today to lead a discussion on Curbing Corruption in Small Jurisdictions.

Bell, who chaired the Legislative Assembly's Special Committee on Conflict Process, was invited to share his experience in this area with representatives participating in a conference arranged by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretariat.

Running from June 10 to 14, the Conference will bring together distinguished Members of Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth Parliaments as well as representatives of organizations concerned with democracy and good governance. Bell will lead the discussion group that will focus on developing clear rules to avoid conflicts of interest, nepotism and cronyism.

"I was honored to have been asked to participate in an international conference on this important subject. I hope by participating and sharing the experience of the Northwest Territories in dealing with conflict of interest, I will be able to bring back approaches from other jurisdictions striving to maintain the balance of trust and integrity in the democratic system," said Mr. Bell.

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02-08





June 10, 2002

For Immediate Release

MLA'S OPPOSE BIP CANCELLATION

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has discussed the recent action taken by the Government suspending the Business Incentive Policy (BIP).

Members were surprised to hear through the media that Cabinet had agreed on May 27, 2002 to waive the BIP for Phase II of the North Slave Correctional Centre.

"If there is a problem with the policy then it would make sense to take the necessary steps to evaluate and change the policy, not suspend it one project at a time," said Mr. Dent, Chair of AOC. The Committee suggested an alternative to suspending the BIP could be to meet with construction industry representatives to discuss approaches to reducing costs in this project.

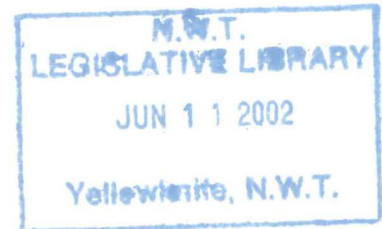
After reviewing and discussing the Cabinet decision, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight strongly recommends that the Government revisit this matter. There is no justification for arbitrarily deciding a Government policy does not apply to just one project.

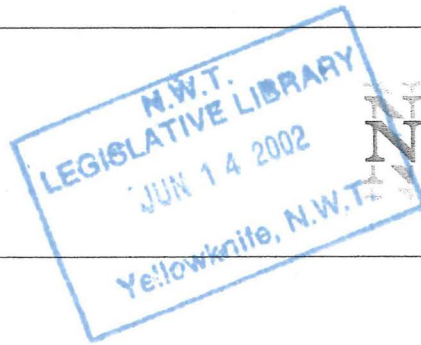
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June 13, 2002

For Immediate Release

Special Committee on the Implementation of Self-Government and the Sunset Clause Releases Its Report on the Sunset Clause

The Special Committee on the Implementation of Self-Government and the Sunset Clause released its report on the sunset clause today in the Legislative Assembly. The report represents the culmination of the Committee's public consultation on the sunset clause during which time the Committee held 21 public meetings in 19 communities across the Northwest Territories.

In their report the Committee recommended that the sunset clause be repealed. In the Legislative Assembly today Ms. Lee said, "The Committee cannot recommend retaining a law that nobody wants to see brought into effect."

The Committee also recommended the Assembly enact electoral districts boundaries commission legislation similar to that previously in force, but with such changes as may be desirable to maximize public involvement and to ensure the effective representation of all communities. The Committee believes that "the enactment of such legislation is required."

The Legislative Assembly will debate the recommendations of the Committee during this session.

With the first part of their mandate complete the Special Committee will now begin the final phase of their mandate, which is to consider how the Legislative Assembly and the Government of the Northwest Territories may be impacted by the implementation of self-government. The Committee will endeavor to provide recommendations for the Legislative Assembly to review prior to the end of the 14th Assembly.

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June 18, 2002

For Immediate Release

Special Committee on Official Languages Releases Progress Report Outlining Directions for Change

The Special Committee on the Review of the *Official Languages Act* today released its Progress Report in the Legislative Assembly. The report represents the first step towards completion of a mandatory, 10-year review of the *Official Languages Act*.

Entitled *One Land - Many Voices*, the report provides an update on the Committee's activities and provides nine directions for change, based on its work to date.

In a statement today, Mr. Steven Nitah, Chair of the Special Committee, stressed that the work of the Committee had only just begun and voiced his firm belief that language and cultural diversity form the foundation of northern society.

"Our report is simply a starting point to foster further discussion among interested leaders, language group representatives, elders, youth and concerned citizens who believe that all of our official languages are an integral part of who we are as northerners. We all have to acknowledge that language revitalisation is a shared social responsibility that will require a balanced, structured and coordinated strategy involving all stakeholders," said Mr. Nitah.

The progress report provides an overview of information gathered through research and community consultations. It also presents nine possible directions for change, to promote discussion and find ways to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the *Official Languages Act*.

With the potential directions for change as the focus, the Special Committee will now work to complete its research and remaining consultations, host a second territorial languages assembly in the fall of 2002, and prepare a final report on its findings and recommendations in the spring of 2003.

The Special Committee was established by the Legislative Assembly on November 15, 2000 and has a mandate to conduct a 10-year review of the Official Languages Act, as required by legislation. The terms of reference of the committee require that a final report be presented to the Legislative Assembly, prior to the dissolution of the 14th Assembly.

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June 20, 2002

For Immediate Release

Standing Committee on Social Programs begins Public Review of the new Human Rights Act

Yesterday the Standing Committee on Social Programs began its public review of Bill 1, the *Human Rights Act* at the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

After hearing from the Sponsor of the Bill, the Hon. Roger Allen, Minister of Justice, Members of the Committee expressed their views on the importance of this legislation. "I feel that Bill 1 will be the most significant piece of legislation that the 14th Assembly will consider during our term," said Mr. Dent.

Chairman Brendan Bell encouraged residents of the NWT to provide their input to the Committee. "On behalf of the Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all residents of the Northwest Territories to make their views known on this crucial piece of legislation," said Mr. Bell.

The public can make submissions to the Committee in writing, by fax, mail or e-mail or in person by registering to appear as a witness at the public hearings to be scheduled during the first two weeks of September. Written submissions and requests to appear as a witness must be received by August 15, 2002.

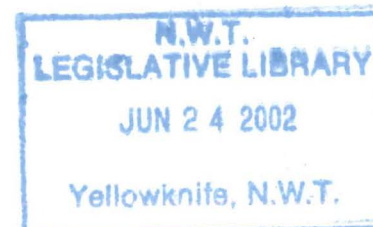
The complete text of Bill 1, a plain language summary, and a letter to northerners are available on the Legislative Assembly's website: www.assembly.gov.nt.ca.

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A Summary of the Provisions of Bill 1: *Human Rights Act*

INTRODUCTION

The following is essentially a summary of the provisions of Bill 1 in plain, easily understandable language. It is not an interpretation of any provision, nor does it constitute a legal opinion for any purpose. The following also contains references to Bill 1 as a “new act” as opposed to our current legislature, the *Fair Practices Act*, and distinctions are made between the two.

Preamble

The Act adopts the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as stated by the United Nations.

The Northwest Territories recognizes that every individual is free and equal regardless of his or her race, colour, ancestry, nationality, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or social condition and any conviction that has been pardoned.

Note: Sexual orientation and social condition were not present as discriminatory grounds in the Fair Practices Act (current NWT human rights legislation) but are now included as prohibited grounds of discrimination.

PART 1:

INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION SECTIONS 1 – 4

The new Act contains an extensive definition section including “disability” and “social condition”.

Includes a new section that states nothing in this Act should conflict with section 35 of the *Constitution Act 1982*, which provides aboriginal or treaty rights to aboriginal peoples.

States that nothing in this Act should conflict with any right or privilege given to denominational schools, by the *Northwest Territories Act (Canada)*.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is required to follow this Act.

PART 2

**PROHIBITIONS
SECTIONS 5 – 15**

Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination and Intent

This part prohibits discrimination because of the prohibited grounds in different types of circumstances.

These circumstances include employment, goods, services, accommodation and facilities, tenancy and publication.

There is a general section that prohibits harassment based on a prohibited ground.

There is also a section that prohibits retaliation against a person making a complaint.

This part confirms that an act of discrimination does not require an intention to discriminate.

Employment

A person cannot, based on a prohibited ground, discriminate in the workplace.

The Act defines “person” as including a number of different types of organizations such as employment agencies and unions.

These persons cannot treat somebody differently in the workplace because of their political belief, political association or family affiliation.

Discrimination on the basis of age or marital status is permitted with respect to the operation of any bona fide workplace retirement or insurance plan.

The employer is permitted to discriminate if it can be established that the “discrimination” is a necessary condition (bona fide occupational requirement) of the employment. In order to succeed with this type of “discrimination” the employer must prove that to accommodate the person would impose an undue hardship.

Includes a provision that allows non-profit organizations, societies, and corporations to use preferential treatment in hiring practices if that preference is directly related to the special objectives outlined in their mandate.

Within this part there are restrictions on the type of information that can be contained in a job advertisement or questions that can be asked in a job interview. These restrictions do not apply if the employer can similarly establish a bona fide occupational requirement or that it will cause an undue hardship.

Includes an equal pay provision, but recognizes certain circumstances may account for justified differences in pay scales.

The discrimination prohibited under the Act applies to unions and employers' organizations.

Goods, Services, Accommodation and Facilities

A person cannot, without a bona fide and reasonable justification, deny or discriminate towards anyone, with respect to goods, services, accommodation or facilities that are ordinarily available to the public.

Includes a similar section providing for bona fide and reasonable justification.

This section also includes specific provisions against discrimination on a prohibited ground in tenancy situations, in any publication or harassing behavior in regard to goods, services, accommodation and facilities.

PART 3 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION SECTIONS 16 – 28

This part of the Act outlines the establishment and composition of the Human Rights Commission. It includes guidelines on who may be appointed to the Commission and how many members are to be appointed (3-5 members). It also includes provisions outlining term of membership, resignation, and removal procedures.

This part also establishes the powers, duties and functions of the Commission. The Commission is responsible for promoting equality and the concept of human rights through public information and education programs. Except for entering into agreements with community organizations to provide alternate dispute resolution, the Commission does not exercise adjudicative functions.

Outlines the qualifications required and responsibilities of the director, deputy director, and acting director for the Commission.

**PART 4
COMPLAINTS
SECTIONS 29 – 46**

General

The Act sets up a scheme of “complaint based” enforcement. An individual, a group, or the Commission can make a complaint of discrimination. Generally, a complaint must be filed within two years of when the alleged violation took place. This part includes provisions for special circumstances where a complaint has not been filed within this specified time period. This part also outlines the steps the Director of the Commission must take after the complaint has been filed.

Settlement

The Act provides for a settlement process as an alternative to the adjudicative process. The Commission employees or an authorized community organization must, by mediation or other means, assist the parties involved to settle their complaint, unless it is deferred, dismissed or referred for adjudication.

Also includes provisions concerning the terms and documentation of the settlement.

Investigation

This section outlines the Commission’s investigative powers. Where access to records from any person is denied, application may be made to a Justice of the Peace or in some circumstances, a Supreme Court judge for a warrant authorizing entry and seizure of relevant records.

Deferral, Dismissal and Appeal of Dismissal

If a complaint is not settled by mediation, the Director can defer, refer for adjudication, or dismiss the complaint. In the event of a dismissal, an appeal can be made to the adjudication panel or ultimately to the Supreme Court.

Referral for Adjudication

In the event that a complaint could not be settled, deferred or dismissed, the Director shall refer a complaint to the adjudication panel.

**PART 5
ADJUDICATION AND APPEAL
SECTIONS 47 - 66**

Adjudication Panel

An adjudication panel is composed of at least three people appointed by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly.

To be eligible for appointment to the adjudicative panel a person must have experience, interest in, and sensitivity to, human rights and either be a member of a territorial or provincial law society for 5 years or have at least 5 years experience as a member of an administrative tribunal or court.

The independence of the adjudicative panel is protected by a maximum 4 year term with removal only on the basis of cause.

The Commissioner, on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly, appoints the Chair of the adjudicative panel. The powers of the Chairperson include the right to assign complaints for hearing to a member of the panel.

General

The Act authorizes the adjudication panel to make rules regarding the hearing process.

Hearing and Decision

This part lists the adjudicator's powers and limitations regarding the administration and hearing of evidence and other powers as outlined in the Public Inquiries Act. The adjudicator is not restricted by any rules with regard to evidence in civil actions or proceedings, so long as the evidence is not deemed inadmissible in a court.

The adjudicator has jurisdiction to hear both a complaint referred by the Director, and an appeal of the decision of the Director to dismiss a complaint.

When a question of law arises, the adjudicator may suspend the hearing to seek guidance from the Supreme Court.

At the conclusion of a hearing the adjudicator will either accept the complaint or dismiss it.

The adjudicator must provide written reasons for the decision.

If the complaint is accepted the adjudicator is authorized to provide numerous remedies but must provide written reasons for the decision.

In certain cases, the adjudicator may order the party responsible for the complaint to pay all or some of the costs of the other party.

The orders of the adjudicator may be enforced by filing them with the Supreme Court.

Appeal

There is a right of appeal to the Supreme Court on a decision provided it is filed within a certain time frame. Upon hearing an appeal, the Supreme Court may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision of the adjudicator.

PART 6 GENERAL SECTION 67 – 75

Affirmative Action Programs

Unlike the *Fair Practices Act*, no approval is required for an affirmative action or employment equity program. However, programs already approved under the *Fair Practices Act* will be protected and will not be considered to be a contravention of the Act.

Miscellaneous

This provision provides immunity from civil action to the Commission, its employees and others so long their actions were carried out in good faith and within their jurisdiction.

Protects individuals working on complaint cases from having to attend or give evidence in proceedings other than a proceeding under this Act.

Proceedings under this Act cannot be considered invalid by defect of technical irregularity reasons.

Offence and Punishment

Anyone who violates this Act can be found guilty of an offence. Upon summary conviction an individual can be fined up to \$2000 and an organization can be fined up to \$10,000.

Where a person is found guilty of retaliatory or obstructionist offences the Act provides for harsher penalties of up to \$5000 for an individual or \$25,000 for an organization.

The Attorney General must provide consent in writing before any prosecution for an offense under this Act can begin.

Regulations

This section authorizes the making of regulations by two separate procedures.

Regulations regarding remuneration or expenses are to be made by the Commissioner, on the recommendation of the Speaker. All other regulations to carry out the provisions of the Act may be made by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Commission.

Transitional

Despite the repeal of the *Fair Practices Act*, where a Fair Practices Officer has started a hearing into a complaint under that Act, the Fair Practices Officer may continue under the former Act. The appointment of the Fair Practices Officer will continue his or her duties as Fair Practices Officer until the hearing is concluded.

ALL NORTHERNERS

Bill 1, *Human Rights Act*

On February 22, 2002, Bill 1, *Human Rights Act* received Second Reading in the Legislative Assembly and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Programs for review.

Bill 1 proposes to replace the *Fair Practices Act* and reform human rights legislation in the Northwest Territories. The Bill would expand the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination, establish an independent Human Rights Commission and put in place modern investigative and adjudicative processes for dealing with complaints.

A copy of Bill 1 and a summary produced by the Standing Committee are enclosed for your information.

This Committee is planning to convene public hearings on the proposed *Human Rights Act* in regional centers across the Northwest Territories within the next six months. Locations and dates will be announced.

In addition to appearing before the Committee at public hearings, written submissions are also encouraged. You can also make your views known to the Legislative Assembly through your MLA.

Written submissions or requests to appear as a witness at a public hearing near you should be sent to the Clerk at the address below:

Dave Inch
Clerk of Committees
Legislative Assembly of the NWT
Box 1320, YELLOWKNIFE, NT X1A 2N4
Tel: (867) 669-2299 or
Toll free: 1-800-661-0784
Fax: (867) 873-0432
Email: clerks@gov.nt.ca

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, we look forward to hearing from you, and to a constructive and rewarding review process on this important legislative initiative.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Bell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long horizontal stroke.

Brendan Bell
Chairperson

Enclosures



August 14, 2002

For Immediate Release

AOC FRUSTRATED BY MINISTER STEEN'S COMMENTS

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight expressed frustration with recent comments apparently made by Minister Vince Steen regarding permanently suspending the Business Incentive Policy (BIP) in Yellowknife.

The Minister appears to be promoting a change in policy without consulting Regular Members. Committee Members noted that the BIP is currently a policy of this government and as such it is incumbent upon Cabinet Ministers to publicly support it. "This government is reviewing the BIP and has announced that proposed revisions will be made available for public discussion. Remarks such as those made by Minister Steen, criticising the current policy are premature and anticipate the outcome of public discussion. It is unconscionable for a member of Cabinet to criticise its own policy," said Mr. Dent, Chair of Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight.

For more information, please contact:

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Chair, Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

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or

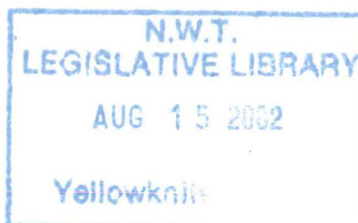
Floyd Roland

Deputy Chair, Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

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August 15, 2002

For Immediate Release

Legislative Assembly's Caucus to Meet at TI'oondih Healing Camp in the Mackenzie Delta.

The Caucus of the 14th Legislative Assembly will continue its tradition of meeting in NWT Communities with a planning session at the TI'oondih Healing Camp, August 19-20, 2002.

"The focus of our discussions will include an assessment of progress to date and a look forward in terms of what we can achieve in the remainder of our time as legislators," explained Caucus Chairman, Bill Braden. "With only a year left in our mandate, we have also highlighted the need for transition planning, to better position the 15th Assembly to consider our various ongoing initiatives when they take office."

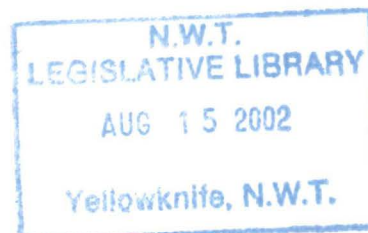
Meetings at the Camp are closed to the public, but a community gathering is being planned for Fort McPherson on the evening of Tuesday, August 20th to give Members the opportunity to meet and talk informally with community and area residents.

For further information, please contact:

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Caucus Chair
Legislative Assembly of the
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Fax: (867) 873-0276

or

Steve Nitah, MLA Tu Nedhe
Caucus Deputy Chair
Legislative Assembly of the
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August 21, 2002

For Immediate Release

Caucus Sets Election Date for 15th Legislative Assembly

The 14th NWT Legislative Assembly will recommend voters go to the polls to elect the 15th Assembly on Monday, November 24, 2003.

The decision was made by Members of the Legislative Assembly at their annual Caucus workshop, held August 19-20, 2002 at the TI'oondih Healing Camp on the Peel River near Fort McPherson.

MLA's also resolved to continue work to achieve the agenda set out in "Towards a Better Tomorrow", the vision document created at the beginning of the term in January 2000.

"We are going into a busy, productive fourth year", said MLA Bill Braden, Caucus Chair. "There is no slowing down. Members are committed to continuing our efforts in achieving this important and balanced agenda for the people of the Northwest Territories. We'll move forward with particular emphasis on small communities, including support for improved infrastructure and community wellness".

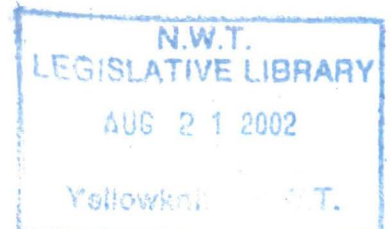
"As Members, we were inspired by our hosts and their work in building and operating the TI'oondih Healing Camp," said Steven Nitah, Deputy Chair of Caucus. "We want to work with community leadership and support front line workers in addressing the challenges which come with large scale developments like diamond mines and the oil and gas industry."

In addition, there was Caucus consensus that the Premier and Cabinet must continue their intensive lobby for immediate actions by Ottawa on the NWT infrastructure proposal, devolution and pipeline preparedness. This will be vital to sustain community and aboriginal support for major resource developments.

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August 27, 2002

For Immediate Release

Standing Committee Announces Hearing Dates on Human Rights Bill

The Standing Committee on Social Programs has selected public hearing dates and locations for Bill 1, *Human Rights Act*.

The Committee will conduct public hearings in Inuvik on Thursday, September 5, 2002 from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM and from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM, and on September 6, 2002 from 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM. These hearings will be held in the Sundog Room at the Midnight Sun Conference Centre.

The Committee will then travel to Fort Smith for hearings on Monday, September 9, 2002 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM in the Council Chambers at the Town Hall.

The remainder of the hearings will be conducted in Committee Room 'A' of the Legislative Assembly Building in Yellowknife on Wednesday, September 11, and Thursday, September 12, 2002, in accordance with the attached schedule.

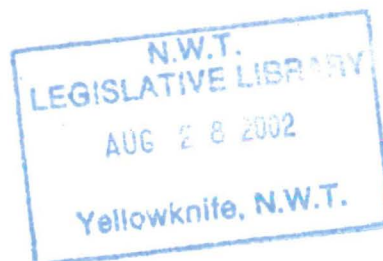
"The Committee is encouraged by the interest expressed by Territorial organizations representing significant portions of our population," noted Committee Chair Brendan Bell, "However, we also feel it's important to give as many northerners as possible, an opportunity to provide input."

"We hope that our hearings will be well attended and that people will tell us what they think about the proposed *Human Rights Act*," said Committee Member Leon Lafferty.

For further information, please contact:

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Legislative Assembly of the
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Dave Inch
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Standing Committee on Social Programs

PUBLIC REVIEW OF BILL 1, *HUMAN RIGHTS ACT* ~ **COMMITTEE ROOM 'A', LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY BUILDING, YELLOWKNIFE**

SCHEDULE OF WITNESSES

Wednesday, September 11, 2002:

9:00 AM: Elaine Keenan-Bengts, Fair Practices Officer
10:00 AM: Barbara Saunders, NWT Status of Women Council
11:00 AM: Fiona Traynor, Yellowknife Women's Centre
1:30 PM: Aimée Clark, National Anti-Poverty Organization
2:30 PM:
3:30 PM: Aggie Brockman, NWT Council for Disabled Persons
4:30 PM: Lewis Beck, Wrigley, NWT
7:00 PM: Bob Haywood, NWT Federation of Labour
8:00 PM:
9:00 PM:

Thursday, September 12, 2002:

9:00 AM: Paul N.K. Smith & Craig Haynes, Lawson Lundell
10:00 AM:
11:00 AM:
1:30 PM: Andy Wong, Workers' Compensation Board
2:30 PM: Jerry Vandebilche, OutNorth
3:30 PM: John Fisher, Égale Canada
4:30 PM:

Attachment #2 to Press Release 02-16

September 25, 2002

For Immediate Release

Second Territorial Languages Assembly to be held October 1 and 2

The Special Committee on the Review of the *Official Languages Act* is hosting the Second Territorial Languages Assembly on October 1 and 2, 2002 on the K'atloodeechee First Nation Reserve.

"The Assembly will be an opportunity to discuss possible directions for change, to promote discussion and find ways to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the *Official Languages Act*," said Mr. Steven Nitah, Chair of the Special Committee.

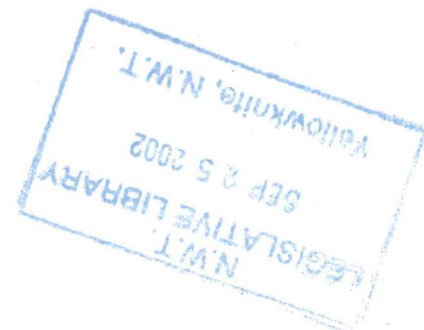
The 50 delegates will participate in plenary and workshop sessions and will be asked to engage in a dialogue over the nine strategic directions for change, as set out in the *Progress Report on the Review of the Official Languages Act*. The report was tabled last June in the Legislative Assembly and should provide a good starting point for discussion.

"This important event," noted the Committee Chair, "will allow Members to determine the general level of support for these directions while helping to identify any modifications necessary to strengthen all of the official languages of the Northwest Territories."

The Special Committee has a mandate to conduct a 10-year review of the *Official Languages Act*, as required by legislation. The Committee is planning to present its final report to the Legislative Assembly next spring.

For more information, please contact:

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e-mail: benoit_boutin@gov.nt.ca



October 7, 2002

For Immediate Release

Official Languages Committee on the Right Track

The Second Territorial Languages Assembly wrapped up last Wednesday afternoon on the K'atloodeechee First Nation Reserve with a strong message from the delegates. The Special Committee is headed in the right direction in its efforts to strengthen the *Official Languages Act* of the Northwest Territories.

"The Assembly was an excellent opportunity for the Members of the Special Committee to hear first hand the level of support for the directions we are proposing," said the Committee Chair, Steven Nitah, "and we are pleased with the support demonstrated by the delegates."

The two-day workshop style meeting involved delegates from each of the Language groups of the NWT and provided Committee Members with valuable feedback regarding the nine strategic directions for change, as set out in the Committee's Progress Report, tabled in the Legislative Assembly in June.

"Our language advocates recognize that language groups, aboriginal leaders, government agencies and individuals all need to share in the responsibility for revitalizing our official languages," said Steven Nitah, "and we must do our part to find ways to increase the accountability, transparency and effectiveness of language services in the north."

In addition to the directions discussed, the delegates told Committee Members that the *Education Act* needs to better support Aboriginal languages and an independent agency should be established to deal specifically with Language issues.

The Special Committee has a mandate to conduct a 10-year review of the *Official Languages Act*, as required by legislation. The Committee is planning to present its final report to the Legislative Assembly in the spring of 2003.

For more information, please contact:

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Committee Coordinator

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October 9, 2002

For Immediate Release

MLA for Hay River South Supports Premier's Intervention

The MLA for Hay River South, Jane Groenewegen has commended Premier, Stephen Kakfwi for providing decisive direction on the power rate application from the Power Corporation.

Ms. Groenewegen indicated that the advancement of a proposal for a single rate for power customers is creating confusion and concern with respect to the Government's position.

"My constituents are very concerned about the impetus and rationale for this proposed major shift in rate design in light of the ongoing formulation and consideration of the Government's Energy Strategy; and the apparent negative impact it would have on Hay River's commercial and residential consumers," said Ms. Groenewegen.

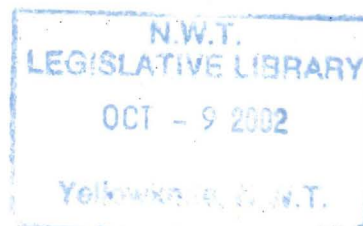
The NWT Power Corporation operates with a fair degree of operational autonomy, and Ms. Groenewegen acknowledged that it is understandably difficult to operate in the absence of the implementation of some of the key recommendations in the Robertson Report and the long anticipated Energy Strategy.

"However, the GNWT as shareholder, has a clear responsibility to harmonize the philosophy of revenue raising which is regulated by the Public Utilities Board, and offsetting GNWT subsidies in relation to the delivery of fairly priced, reliable electricity to all northerners," said Ms. Groenewegen.

"The Premier's intervention is clearly warranted in this instance in the protection of the public interest. It would be highly inappropriate to allow this application and the associated campaign to proceed, in advance of a comprehensive assessment of all impacts in tandem with a fully developed Cabinet approved Energy Strategy," concluded Ms. Groenewegen.

For more information, please contact:

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Northwest
Territories Legislative Assembly
Member for Mackenzie Delta

PRESS RELEASE

October 10, 2002

For Immediate Release

MLA, David Krutko Disappointed with GNWT Decision on Single-Rate Zone

Mr. David Krutko, MLA for Mackenzie Delta, expressed his disappointment that the GNWT has directed the NWT Power Corporation to withdraw its application for a single rate zone that had been filed with the Public Utilities Board. "A review of the proposal set out by the Power Corporation would have provided NWT residents with their first opportunity to voice their opinions on this important issue," said Mr. Krutko.

A great deal of interest was generated by the NWT Power Corporation's proposal to implement a single rate for power costs in the NWT. More than 35 groups and individuals had given notice of their intention to intervene in the process. This expression of interest alone indicated that the issue was of wide concern and interest.

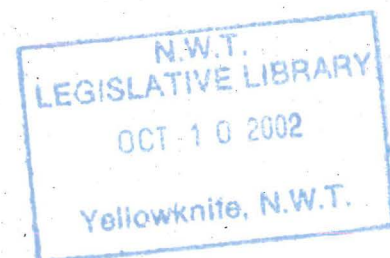
"The GNWT should not interfere in a public process. A fair balance needs to be reached for the benefit of all NWT residents. Halting a public review does nothing but eliminate public input," said Mr. Krutko.

Constituents of Mackenzie Delta had expressed their intention to intervene in order to voice their support for the proposal. Without public hearings on the Power Corporation's proposal, the people in the Mackenzie Delta region will not have an opportunity to share their concerns and thoughts.

"It is very important for all NWT residents to feel that their voice will be heard and respected in important matters. In canceling the hearing, the GNWT has quashed the concerns and thoughts of all residents. That is very disappointing," concluded Mr. Krutko.

For more information, please contact:

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PRESS RELEASE

October 11, 2002

For Immediate Release

Territorial Cabinet Short-Circuits Energy Strategy

Leon Lafferty, MLA for North Slave, said the Territorial Cabinet is short-circuiting its own energy strategy by halting a public review on power rates.

"Power generation and fair rates are an issue that affect every person in the Territory," says Lafferty. He notes that in his own North Slave riding one community is on hydro while three communities have their power generated by diesel. "Without factoring in the current subsidy, it is not fair to ask northerners using natural gas, diesel or hydro to pay the same rates," said Lafferty.

It was through public consultation that Lafferty felt the sharing of ideas and other options to address the needs of all Northerners would have been heard. "Due to Cabinet's uncoordinated approach the small communities and other northerners will not have the opportunity to be heard," said Lafferty.

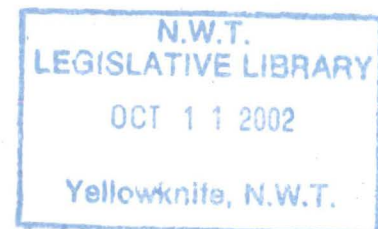
Lafferty agrees with the Premier that the government's energy strategy must be completed, published and shared with members of the Legislature and the public before any changes to the power rates are made. However, Lafferty feels that a valuable opportunity for getting public input and exploring options has been switched off. "By pulling the plug at this stage, the Premier has put an end to what would have been a valuable process," said Lafferty.

Other possible rate options for power were not brought forward for public scrutiny. By putting forward only one option for rates, Lafferty believes the unique structures that exist in northern communities will not be considered. Lafferty suggested that two-tiered levelized rates that take into account the sources of power could have been implemented.

"If it were up to me," says Lafferty, "Northerners would pay a low flat rate with the Territorial Government paying the infrastructure costs." He notes that with the review shut down, options such as this will not be explored and smaller communities will continue to pay a higher power cost than larger centres.

For more information:

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Customers hit hardest in Power Corp Board debacle

Yellowknife NT (October 16, 2002) – While the en masse dismissal of the NWT Power Corporation Board is a sad and clumsy event -- and one that was likely entirely avoidable -- it is the customer who is the big loser in the mess created by Cabinet's heavy-handed interference in the Corporation's single rate zone application, says Great Slave MLA Bill Braden.

"The 8,000 customers of the Power Corporation, in communities big and small, have been denied the opportunity to hear the arguments and join in the debate about the way we pay for electricity," said Braden.

"By cutting off debate, the GNWT has denied customers' access to the very process it set up in the early 1990s-- the Public Utility Board -- to allow this kind of public involvement, and ownership, in deciding vital public policy. It is a sad day for governance in the NWT."

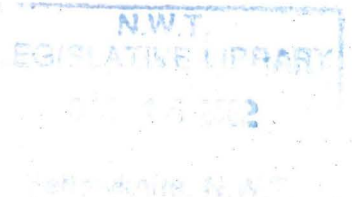
Braden's statement comes in the wake of the sudden dismissal yesterday of all directors, and the chairman, after Premier Stephen Kakfwi ordered that the Board halt its application for a single rate zone across the NWT. Kakfwi was acting on an August directive from cabinet to the Corporation to do so, at least until the anticipated energy strategy is adopted.

For the past several weeks, the Corporation obviously had a different interpretation of the instruction, as it continued to promote the single rate plan.

In the upcoming session of the Legislative Assembly, Braden will be looking for answers as to why the Corporation and the government failed to communicate clearly with each other, and why the situation was allowed to spiral into the drastic ultimatum that resulted in the loss of the entire Board.

"At the end of the day, the Government remains accountable for the actions of its appointed boards and must take measures to protect its interests," he said. "But the en masse dismissal of one of the NWT's most effective, and responsible boards, begs questions about the way government manages these issues, and why we chose to disregard our own public process."

For More Information:
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email: bill_braden@gov.nt.ca





October 23, 2002

Press Release

For Immediate Release

AOC to Publicly Review Auditor General Report

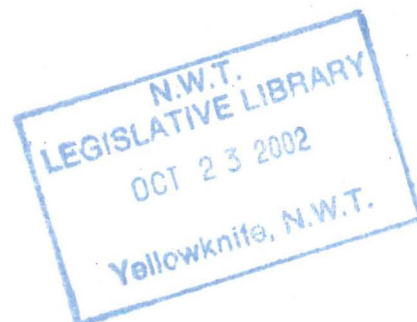
Under direction of the Legislative Assembly, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight will hold a public meeting on the Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories on Termination Compensation to Two Senior Officials. The meeting will be held on Thursday, October 24, 2002 at 10:30am in Committee Room "A."

The Committee will be meeting with Ms. Sheila Fraser, FCA, Auditor General of Canada. The Committee will consider the Report and provide a report to the Legislative Assembly as soon as practicable.

Those members of the public and media that are interested in attending the meeting are welcome to view the proceedings.

For more information please contact:

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PRESS RELEASE

October 28, 2002

For Immediate Release

Nitah to attend the Halifax Kyoto Accord Conference

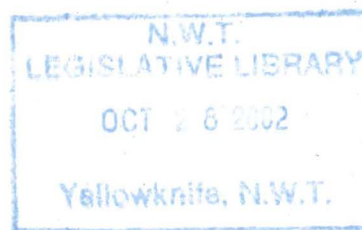
Steve Nitah, MLA for Tu Nedhe has been asked to attend the Kyoto Accord Conference in Halifax with Minister Jim Antoine. Mr. Nitah has agreed to attend because of the significant impact that the agreement will have on the NWT and his constituents.

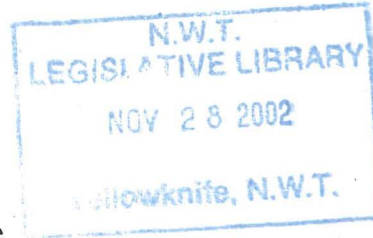
Mr. Nitah is aware of the outstanding request for Premier Kakfwi to resign. The debate over this issue will resume today in the House. Mr. Nitah stated that this issue has caused uncertainty and instability and must be resolved immediately. "My confidence in the Premier has been shaken as it has been for many residents of the NWT. Mr. Kakfwi should do the right thing and resign his position. The NWT needs to move forward and we need to put this uncertainty behind us," said, Mr. Nitah.

The Kyoto Accord is one of many issues that require the Members immediate attention. Mr. Nitah indicated that the NWT has to consider how the other provinces, territories and their leaders view our stability. "Our economic future and looming debt need to be addressed. The continuation of infighting needs to end, and the NWT has to be represented by Members that want the best for the territories now and in the future," said Mr. Nitah.

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Press Release

For Immediate Release

Stanton Cleanout Gets It (Mostly) Right, says Braden

Yellowknife, NT (November 28, 2002) -- Bill Braden, Great Slave MLA, issued this statement regarding events surrounding the Stanton Territorial Hospital Authority. It is included in his forthcoming newsletter, to be distributed December 7

In the recent, rapid sequence of decisions that dismissed, dissolved and replaced most of Stanton Territorial Hospital's leadership, Health Minister Michael Miltenberger got most of the job done right.

I support the permanent elimination of the board of directors, and the overall Authority, of the Stanton hospital. In recent years, it has brought little real value to the actual delivery of health services in the NWT. There has been a chronic, crippling dispute between the Board, the Department of Health, the Minister, and stakeholders on overall accountability, governance and management. Those functions are now clear: they rest solely with the Department/Minister.

I support the appointment of a Public Administrator -- in other words, an interim boss (Deputy Health Minister Dave Murray) with broad authority, reporting only to the Minister. His mandate has not yet been made public. Nor is there is any indication at this time of how long his appointment will be in effect.

I do not support the board's dismissal of CEO Dennis Cleaver. With the support Mr. Cleaver had from staff and doctors, I believe he could have been, at least in the short term, part of the solution. The Administrator should have handled his long-term situation.

However, as his replacement, the appointment of Al Woods as the interim Stanton CEO is a good move. Mr. Woods brings great credibility and trust



into the task, from his experience as CEO for the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board. This will put a strain on YKHSSB's own operating system, and I'm preparing to go to bat for extra support to help our own City's health board through this period.

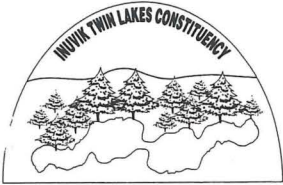
Also not addressed is how the voices of patients, communities and regions can be heard in the way Stanton operates. It would be unacceptable that such a critical territorial facility be without some process for communication and input. My recommendation is to ask the chairs of the regional and community boards to serve in an advisory capacity to the new Stanton leaders.

During the last session, I urged Minister Miltenberger to try to demonstrate some "respect, compassion and humility" in his messages towards the people involved in the health care system. In these changes, he got most of a tough job done right, but I'd still like to see these qualities of leadership coming from the Minister.

My most sincere message is one of thanks for the nurses, doctors and support staff at the Stanton Hospital and city clinics for continuing to work through this most difficult period. With your commitment, I look forward to restoring the level of caring and service for which Stanton was famous.

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ROGER T. ALLEN, MLA

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Inuvik Twin Lakes MLA, Applauds Recent Merger in Inuvik

Yellowknife, NT (December 18, 2002) – Roger Allen, MLA for Inuvik Twin Lakes applauds the recent merger between two Inuvik construction companies.

GDC Civil Construction and Arctic Tire Ltd. recently announced the merger of the two Inuvik companies. The companies will merge early in the New Year to form the Mackenzie Valley Construction Company.

“A hearty congratulations to both of these local companies. They both have a solid track record of hiring local people and clearly add to the economy of Inuvik,” said Roger Allen.

The merger will give both companies more strength and diversity and will allow them to better respond to business opportunities that may develop if a pipeline project is developed through the Mackenzie Valley. The merger will take place in the New Year.

“It’s great to see Inuvik companies taking steps to take advantage of future opportunities that a pipeline could bring. This is the kind of home-grown innovation that helps to build capacity in the NWT,” Allen went on to say.

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