

Put up or shut up

Premier says questions surrounding office tower damaging his credibility

by Richard Gleeson
Northern News Services

In a dramatic shift from defence to offence, Premier Don Morin challenged MLAs with concerns about the Lahm Ridge Tower deal to go over his head.

"I am fed up with the speculation and innuendo which is being repeated in this building, in the press and on the street about the Lahm Ridge Tower lease," the premier told the legislative assembly Wednesday.

Morin said the questions are damaging his reputation, cabinet's and the assembly as a whole.

"I challenge the member from Hay River or anyone else who may believe there is wrongdoing to file a complaint against me with the conflict of interest commissioner, if they have the guts and political backbone," said Morin.

Questions about the extension of a government lease on the building have been swirling since the session resumed last week.

The target of Morin's comments, MLA Jane Groenewegen, has been asking the government to explain details of the deal, approved just before the sale of the building to former cabinet secretary cabinet Roland Bailey and Mike Mrdenovich, the builder of the Morin's luxury home.

Responding to Morin's



Don Morin: questions critics' backbones.

challenge, Groenewegen vowed to continue asking questions about the lease.

"I want to assure you the member from Hay River lacks no guts," said Groenewegen.

"In spite of being called to the premier's office, with the assistant deputy minister as the premier's witness and the premier outlining that he would take appropriate actions if I crossed the lines of impropriety in my search for answers, I still adhere to my right to ask respectful questions in this house and I will continue to do so."

Morin later recounted a meeting he called with Groe-

newegen before Christmas.

"When we met with Jane before Christmas, I said, 'Ask all the questions you want, but don't slander me in the process.'"

Morin said he decided to make the statement because the innuendo persists after the government had responded to members' questions about the lease.

"In the (legislative assembly) you have special protection and a member can use that to slide and slither and get away with things they wouldn't get away with outside," he said.

MLAs cannot be sued for anything said in proceedings of the assembly. Elsewhere, however, they are subject to the same libel and slander laws as any individual or company.

"Anyone can see a bogeyman in the closet if they want," said Morin. "To me it was a straightforward business deal."

Morin said he raised the issue of an unsigned note containing a veiled threat that was passed to Groenewegen in the legislative assembly last week.

"I know one thing. None of my cabinet ministers wrote the note, because I asked them."

But Morin's challenge did little to stem the flow of questions. Yellowknife North MLA Roy Erasmus said a chronology of the deal sup-

plied by the government did not provide enough detail.

There are a number of outstanding questions that remain about the lease, among them:

- Was the lease extension connected to the sale of the

building, and if not, why was it finalized on the same day as the new mortgage?

- If the government wants the deal to be transparent, why will it not release the lease agreement?

Involuntary icebreaker

Stirling lucky to be alive

by Derek Neary

Northern News Services

It's a snowmobiler's worst nightmare.

In an effort to ensure safety, Rod Stirling nearly lost his life Sunday afternoon.

Stirling was snowmobiling on Prosperous Lake near Cassidy Point, about 24 kilometres from the city. He had his seven-year-old son on the back and was accompanied by John Oldfield and his two sons.

"We were just out for a ride ... blue skies, sunshine, it was nice," Stirling said.

They decided to ride towards Tartan Rapids. Remembering that a snowmobiler had a close call in that area last year, Stirling knew he should be cautious.

With no tracks to follow, Stirling and his companions slowed to a stop and decided that, as the weather has been fairly warm, the ice should be



Rod Stirling: "It was pretty scary."

"If I had been sucked under the ice it would have been game over," said Stirling, who has been a snowmobiler since he was a kid. "It was pretty scary."

Second, Oldfield was once a firefighter and paramedic. He carefully manoeuvred to the edge of the hole and grabbed hold of Stirling. Although he was able to rescue his friend,

Yellowknife, N.W.T.
FEB 11 1998

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 40-13(5) TABLED ON FEB 10 1998

NWT LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY
3 1936 00047 307 2

Health consultants chosen

The Yellowknife Health and advisory committee is chosen Terriplan Consultants to develop a plan for the transfer of responsibility for health from the territorial government to the city.

Originally started as a company in Iqaluit in 1987, Terriplan has been headquartered in Yellowknife since 1991. "Now it's just a matter of getting on with the work," said Terriplan team member Andy Wierski.

Sounding the alarms

Pranksters pulling fire alarms at the Centre Square and YK Centre malls are asking a trip to court. There were false alarms at both malls Tuesday afternoon. Centre Square experienced the same thing the previous evening.

The people responsible believed to be youths — could be charged with mischief for tampering with alarms, said Mike Loring, Yellowknife deputy fire chief, adding that there's a danger that mall employees have become desensitized to the alarms.

Daily Ann cooking

The Salvation Army is starting a new program to teach those on welfare how to stretch their food dollars. Our mandate is to help people," says director of community services Karen Bell. "It will also help