

opinions

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 49 - 1 5 (5) TABLED ON OCT 20 2006

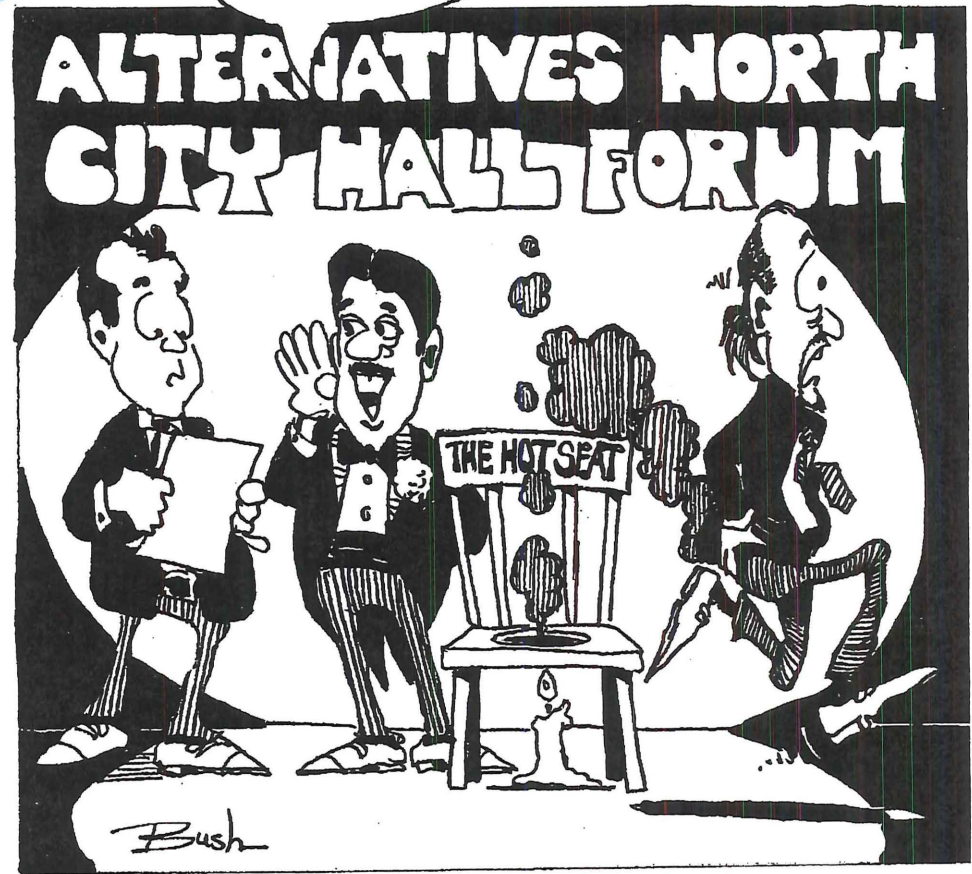
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CANDIDATES HAVE TWO STINTS ON THE "HOT SEAT" IN ONE DAY

Literacy cuts not all bad?

From: Cate Sills, Executive Director, NWT Literacy Council, Yellowknife

Contrary to what some people may believe, the \$17.7 million cuts to adult literacy programming by the federal Conservative government have had an immediate and devastating impact on literacy in the Northwest Territories. Local and regional literacy organizations like the NWT Literacy Council, Aurora College and La Federation Franco-Tenoise (FFT) have lost federal funding that previously supported their work. This cut represents a loss of more than \$600,000 in literacy spending.

The Conservative government would like the Canadian public to believe that the cuts were aimed at programs that were not achieving results and were not good value for money. It is too bad that no one from the Conservative government bothered to ask what these programs are actually accomplishing. They would have found out

for example, that the NWT Literacy Council has:

- Trained family literacy coordinators in every community of the NWT to provide literacy programs for northern parents and their children and maintained a network of support for these programs
- Helped develop and support family literacy programs in almost every community of the NWT
- Provided much needed learning resources and

tools to family and community literacy programs

- Built partnerships with Aboriginal organizations to support Aboriginal literacy development
- Provided program planning and proposal writing workshops to community groups interested in developing local literacy projects
- Promoted literacy through NWT Literacy Week, Family Literacy Day and the PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy
- Fund raised to support local literacy projects in NWT communities
- Carried out research to strengthen our knowledge

about literacy in the NWT - And yes, advocated on behalf of literacy learners, instructors and communities. This advocacy work resulted in the Government of the NWT's commitment to a literacy strategy and encouraged public investment in literacy.

The Conservative government would have also found out that Aurora College ran two literacy outreach centres that provided direct instruction to adults with low literacy. It would have also found out that the FFT provided a very successful French literacy program to francophone parents and their children in communities across the NWT. All of these programs and services are now gone or severely compromised without warning and without consultation.

The Conservative government says it has committed \$81 million to adult literacy. It is important to understand, however, that this is not new money, or is it money that NWT communities and organizations can apply for to address local literacy needs.

The focus of this funding is to support national projects that meet federal government

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