

**15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly**

**Third Session**  
**March 16 - 31, 2004**

**MARCH 31, 2004**

**Member's Statement On Investing In Tourism In The Northwest Territories**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to use my Member's statement today to draw attention to an area of our economy that does not always get the respect it deserves. That area is tourism, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

I believe that the Government of the Northwest Territories has to get serious about tourism and the way we market and promote our territory to Canada and the rest of the world. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Arctic Tourism Association carries the mandate from this government to promote and market the Northwest Territories. This organization should be recognized for the onerous job they have been providing the tourism industry in our territory. Mr. Speaker, they provide this service with a skeleton staff of four and which, along with the overall budget of \$1.8 million, happens to be the smallest in Canada.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, Nunavut – with no roads, less on the ground infrastructure, and product – has a greater budget for tourism than the Northwest Territories. The Government in the Yukon has just boosted their tourism budget by \$1.3 million which, by the way, amounts to our entire marketing budget, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to recognize the job that Mr. Jim Peterson, the President, has done in the last 15 months in turning this organization around. Also, Mr. Speaker, the other two key employees at Northwest Territories Arctic Tourism, the Executive Director, Mr. David Grindley, and Communications Director, Brian Desjardins, also deserve a great deal of recognition for the job they have been doing.

Mr. Speaker, tourism often gets lost in the shuffle at RWED. It has diamonds, oil, gas and other mineral developments to compete with. We must pay more attention to this growing and exciting segment of our economy. It is sustainable development. It helps diversify our resource based economy. I am looking forward to going through the business planning process in the months ahead and any anticipated restructuring of the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, to see if we can't find some creative ways to get more funding and support to an organization that has demonstrated that it deserves the respect and support of this government.

We have so much to offer visitors to our territory such as hunting, fishing, aurora viewing, other outdoor activities, cultural events, festivals and a natural beauty that, Mr. Speaker, rivals anything on our planet. The budget process has concluded this week. I just wanted to mention to the other Members of this House that I do hope we, as a group, can soon set our priorities so that we can give this industry – and the 800 jobs and the \$50 million it adds to our economy – the attention that it rightly deserves. Thank you.

--- Applause