

## 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly

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#### Absence of Premier Roland to Council of the Federation Meeting

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to speak today about the Premiers' conference that was held recently in Montreal. There is one Premier out of the 13 provincial and territorial Ministers who was absent from that meeting. Mr. Speaker, that was our Premier, Minister Roland.

The Premiers were meeting to discuss the global economic crisis and how the provinces and territories will be impacted by these volatile economic times. More important is the fact that the federal government will be a key player in fiscal issues pertaining to the provinces and territories. The backdrop to this meeting is the global financial crisis that the International Monetary Fund estimates will result in global financial losses of more than \$1 trillion. The potential credit crunch threatens a global recession that will result in the slowest economic growth in 17 years, according to the Bank of Canada.

There is a growing concern that the federal government will have to run deficits in the coming years. Just last year a more generous equalization formula was brought in by the Conservative government. There is a fear among the Premiers that like the Chrétien government in the 1990s, the current government may entertain cuts to transfers to the provinces and territories as a way to balance budgets.

With these very compelling reasons, our Premier should have been at the table with the other Premiers. The Northwest Territories fought long and hard to get a seat at the national table. When a meeting like this is called, we need to be there. In his Sessional Statement the Premier states, "There is a lot of confusion and uncertainty out there, and NWT residents and businesses will be affected."

Why, then, would our Premier, who is elected to represent all the residents of the Northwest Territories, choose to be absent? In his comments to the CBC yesterday, it would appear that the Premier was more interested in capital projects in his riding than the interests of the territory as a whole.

I would like to remind the Premier that he has given the role of Finance Minister to Mr. Miltenberger, who also happens to be a very capable Deputy Premier. And he has a very solid Minister of Public Works and Services. The capital appropriation would have been dealt with accordingly. It's hard to be taken seriously at the national level when you don't show up to the meetings, Mr. Speaker. I'll have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Mahsi.