

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

**TRIBUTE TO RUTH SPENCE, ORDER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
RECIPIENT**

February 24, 2016

MS GREEN: In September last year, Commissioner George Tuccaro inducted the first members of the Order of the Northwest Territories in a ceremony in this Chamber. Ruth Spence of Yellowknife was among the first five inductees. Since then, no recognition of this tremendous distinction has been given before this Assembly, so I rise here today to correct that omission.

Ruth Spence has been a community activist and organizer in the North since her arrival here, almost 50 years ago. In 1966, the YWCA opened at 12-bed facility in a house on Matonabee Street, specifically for girls who were travelling to Yellowknife from communities across the NWT.

Ruth became the first executive director and was the driving force behind the move and expansion of the YWCA into the old RCMP barracks, which is now used as a daycare, where she could accommodate 20 women. In 1976, Ruth's tireless lobbying and deal making with the GNWT and the United Church enabled the Y to move into Northern United Place, with 84 bachelor and one-bedroom apartments.

Through the Y, Ruth established the first summer day camps for children, the first daycare centres, and the first after-school programs. In addition to her service to the Y, Ruth was elected to multiple terms on Yellowknife City Council, was a member and chair of the Stanton Hospital Board, and president of Western Arctic Liberal Association.

On the national stage, Ruth represented northern interests on the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, a national council established on the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, to advise the federal government and inform and educate the public about women's concerns.

And not least of all, Ruth Spence is the proud mother of Matthew, Duff, Kit, John and Patricia, and granny to 13 grandchildren, and the loving wife of Robert, known as Bob, who died in 2003. Ruth Spence's life has been a tireless championship for the rights of women and children. She pioneered a number of institutions and programs that continue to provide services to Northerners today.

Ruth Spence is richly deserved of this highest civilian award that we offer, and I'd like to take this opportunity to mention that the nominations are open until the beginning of next month for the next round of the Order of the Northwest Territories, and I encourage people to think about who would be worthy recipients in their communities.