

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

ALLOCATION OF LOTTERY FUNDS

June 9 , 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the money raised in the NWT through the Western Canada Lotteries Program, like Lotto 649, Lotto Max, and all the scratch tickets, is administered by the NWT Sports and Recreation Council. About \$4 million a year has been disbursed to the territorial sporting groups and events for each of the last four years. These lottery profits go only to sports organizations here in the NWT. In all other jurisdictions except Nunavut, lottery money is also dispersed to arts organizations and community service groups.

The question of whether sporting organizations should continue to be the sole beneficiaries of lottery funds has been debated as far back as 2008, when questions were raised in this Assembly about the diversification of funding to other participants. In response to questions of that day, the Minister of MACA, who is the same Minister today, by the way, said that: "MACA is working with the NWT Council of Sports and Recreation partners to review the overall management of lotteries in the Northwest Territories." Well, that was hardly a review that would result in one of the reviewers opening its own cash box for other organizations. So the money continues to be sports-only.

This year, a Request for Proposals was issued for another review of lotteries in response to specific legal matters raised by the Canada Revenue Agency. Again though, no mention of a broader division of proceeds.

The arts are equally worthy of funding, not only for personal growth, but as a promising segment of economic growth. National statistics show that, on average, investments in the arts result in an 8 to 1 payback for every dollar invested. They provide attractions for tourism, increased business for hotels and restaurants, products for craft and fine art sellers, and jobs, to name a few of the spin-offs.

As this Government worries about its bottom line, seeding our limited funds to areas that will provide economic diversification makes good sense. We have only to look at our neighbours in the Yukon to see what benefits a serious investment in the arts community brings in terms of tourism product and employment.

I will have questions for The Minister on taking a new look at the allocation of lottery funds. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.