

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

GROWTH OF THE FILM, TELEVISION AND MEDIA ARTS SECTOR

June 27, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the growth of the film, television and media arts sector is an economic success story in the Northwest Territories. In early 2015, ITI tabled Take One, a strategy and action plan to grow the economic potential of the sector, then at \$9.7 million a year. The introduction of a \$100,000 pot of money for a rebate program to be spent on training, spending and travel provided incentives to film on location with local residents.

The feature film, *The Sun at Midnight*, was one of two films approved for the rebate last year. With a total budget of \$250,000, the producers were able to employ 34 Northerners in various capacities. Over 70 per cent of that budget was spent in the NWT, and half of that in the community of Fort McPherson. The filmmakers only spent money in the south when expertise and services were unavailable in the north. An early valuation of the film says it looks like it costs \$2 million to make, a tremendous complement to the whole crew. The film will be completed in July and shown at various festivals.

There are successes on TV as well. *Dene: A Journey* has highlighted the culture of the NWT for a national audience. It was renewed for a second season with APTN. Another program, *Fur Harvesters NWT*, shot in Hay River, averaged a viewership of 2.2 million, the highest ever for a new show in the history of WildTV. The government has wisely, yes wisely, recognized the success of this sector by doubling rebate funding available for this fiscal year. Just this month the Minister said the program is no longer a pilot, but a permanent fixture.

The world is obviously hungry for Northern stories. With increased experience, exposure and proven products, Northern producers now have the opportunity to access greater pots of money both nationally and internationally. Notably, the Canadian Media Fund has just raised the Northern incentive fund to \$1 million this year because of the desire to see more Northern and regional programming.

The film, television, and media arts sector has proven returns. Companies working in this sector should have proper financial incentives to develop projects that can prove profitable and generate returns in the North.

I propose the GNWT create financial incentives similar to the mining incentive program for Northern professionals to develop Northern content. In addition to attracting more outside productions to the NWT, we can actively continue to grow the film, television and media arts sector from within. If we are to take this sector seriously, we must further increase investment in it in the next budget.