

Constituency Newsletter

From the Assembly

Everett Kippert Pardon

I saluted the Government of Canada for its announcement of the pardon of Everett George Klippert, the last man in Canada to be charged, convicted, and sentenced to prison for being gay. He lived and worked in Pine Point, NWT and was tried and sentenced by our NWT courts.

Family Violence

The Coalition Against Family Violence stated its priorities in a presentation to MLAs, and I confirmed the priorities in a statement to the Assembly: the need for prevention, to change social attitudes to family violence; the desperate need for improved community response; and for healing programs. Reducing family violence is one of the priorities of the Social Development Committee of which I am deputy chair.

Tribute to Ruth Spence

Ruth Spence was honoured last fall as one of the first recipients of the new Order of the NWT. I joined in saluting her many contributions to community building, from her founding service with YWCA Yellowknife to her many elected and appointed leadership roles.

Constituency Meeting

The Legislative Assembly's next session is May 31 to June 29.

The budget is the main item of business.

Wednesday May 25

Baker Centre 7 PM

Please come and share your issues and concerns.

Disabilities Action Plan

In 2008, a 5-year action plan for persons with disabilities was created. It contained 34 action items dealing with education, employment, disability supports, income, and housing. Since the plan was passed, nothing has happened. I sponsored a motion calling on the government to work with the Council for Persons with Disabilities, to create a real action plan with deadlines and outputs, and report back to the Assembly on how action will be taken. The motion was supported by all MLAs in a recorded vote.

Diversifying the Economy

In a world of shaky commodity prices, I pressed the government to concentrate economic development efforts and support programs on expanding our secondary industries. For each dollar invested, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, forestry and the renewable energy sectors produce vastly more jobs than spending in the oil and gas or mining sectors. We need to open up more agricultural land to grow more jobs.

Wage Subsidy for Child Care Workers

Last year's feasibility study on universal childcare contained some recommended easy fixes to immediate problems in the child care system. I pressed the minister to act on the recommendation to start paying the wage subsidy for child care workers directly to their employers, to speed up the payment of these funds to the workers. We're waiting for the minister's action on that one.



Robyne Walsh of Ecole Sir John Franklin High School was a page in the February-March session of the Legislative Assembly.

Fibre Optic Link Project

Media reports show the P3 work on the Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link to Inuvik is a mess, with the contractor and its sub-contractor fighting in court. When I asked about project oversight and consequences, the minister said the cost and timing of the project won't be affected and safeguards are in place to track the project delivery. I'll be closely watching this project, and the P3 delivery of the huge Stanton Hospital project, to ensure the GNWT doesn't get stuck with cost overruns.

Housing Issues and Homelessness

Having a Home—It's the Basis of Healthy Life

A walk through the Yellowknife Centre riding provides a reality check on homelessness. There are an increased number of people congregating in doorways, with nowhere to go and nothing to do. Many prefer to be outside than in the day shelter after a long winter indoors. This renewed visibility has raised the profile of homelessness in the capital and across the territory, as well as discussion about Housing First as a tried and true solution.

In conversation, homeless people talk about the challenges they face. Often, mental health and addictions issues have resulted in their homelessness. While some are originally from Yellowknife, many are from communities around the NWT. They've migrated to the capital for services, treatment, jail or proximity to alcohol. Their situations highlight the need not only for a safe place to live but services that will help them stabilize and heal.

I campaigned on the need to address the growing issue of homelessness in Yellowknife Centre and spoke about it and Housing First during the winter session. I am passionate about meeting

housing needs because I believe a person with a place to live is more likely to succeed with treatment, education or work. Research shows this is true.

There's another acute housing need that is less visible and that's housing for seniors. A total of 54 people are on the waiting list for the independent units at Aven Court and Aven Ridge, providing a wait time of up to six years. There's also a waiting list for long-term care at Aven Manor. Studies by both Avens and the GNWT reveal that the shortage of housing for seniors is going to become much worse as the population of older adults triples in Yellowknife in the next 10 years. In the meantime, seniors who need long-term care are living on their own and at risk because of their failing mental and physical health. Families do what they can to pick up the slack but many don't have the time to provide 24/7 care.



A group of community leaders met in Yellowknife for two days last month to discuss homelessness downtown. The purpose of the gathering was to produce an action plan. But instead it produced a commitment to more talking. The workshop participants brought a wealth of experience and compassion to the meeting, but we left empty-handed and without the sense that finding and implementing a solution before next winter is urgent. Yellowknife City Councillor Linda Bussey (left) and John Howard Society Executive Director Lydia Bardak participated with me in the gathering.

The mandate of the 18th Assembly includes as one of its priorities "increasing the availability of safe, affordable housing and creating solutions for homelessness." This priority doesn't convey the urgency I feel to meet housing needs, but rest assured that it's at the top of my list.



I attended the third annual GNWT anti-poverty round table for two days at the end of March. The event brought together non-profit and government service providers, who focus on people in need. Half a dozen MLAs attended the workshop as well, demonstrating that "we're all in this together," as one delegate said. I am impressed with the grassroots approach to food security in Gameti where residents have developed a garden and greenhouse to meet their needs. This project and others received money from the GNWT's \$500,000 Anti-Poverty Fund. I'm told applications for funding for this year will be available shortly. Work is underway on how to measure the impact of anti-poverty initiatives, as well as a new anti-poverty website. For more on the round table, see my blog www.yellowknifecentre.ca/category/blog/. You see me here with Yellowknife Mayor Mark Heyck (left), GNWT Director of Aboriginal Health and Community Wellness Sabrina Broadhead, and Frame Lake MLA Kevin O'Reilly.

Social Development Committee Focuses on Vulnerable Populations

My colleagues and I on the standing committee on social development held our strategic planning retreat in Aklavik and Inuvik at the beginning of April. It was our chance to talk about our priorities for the next four years.

The standing committee works toward realizing the mandate of the 18th Assembly and provides oversight of government activity in the social envelope departments including:

- Health and Social Services
- Justice
- Education, Culture and Employment and the
- NWT Housing Corporation.

My colleagues on the committee are:

- Shane Thompson, MLA Nahendeh (Chair)
- Michael Nadli, MLA Deh Cho
- Tom Beaulieu, MLA Tu Nedhe – Wiilideh and
- Frederick Blake Jr, MLA Mackenzie Delta

Next: the 2016-17 budget

When the Legislative Assembly resumes sitting on May 31, our first and main order of business will be to review and debate the GNWT budget for the current fiscal year. The budget is being presented late because of the timing of the last election.

The budget has already dominated the time of regular MLAs leading up to the sitting. Each of the departments has presented its business plan for the year, detailing its programming and associated costs. The standing committees spent two weeks looking at the plans at the beginning of the month.

The finance minister, Robert C McLeod, has made a point of downplaying expectations of government spending and warned he is looking for \$150 million worth of cuts in the life of this assembly. In simple terms, government revenue has declined and spending continues to grow. That means more debt going forward and also decreased cash surpluses. The cash surpluses are required in order to provide money to match federal dollars for road construction.

I have questioned the need to create surpluses for roads. Many communities

I am the committee's deputy chair.

Our first priority is to build and maintain more social housing. Nearly every community in the NWT needs more housing and major repairs to existing units. We believe that access to appropriate housing helps people to succeed at work and school by providing a safe and suitable place to live.

Our second priority is to address what the mandate calls the "crisis in family violence." Rates remain stubbornly high at nine times the national average and as recently as 2012, six women were killed by their partners in the NWT. I believe that we have to shift social attitudes toward women's equality as a first step to making violence against women as unacceptable as drinking and driving.

Our third priority is to address the unmet needs for seniors housing along a continuum that begins with supporting aging in place and ends with long-term care in territorial facilities.

are in greater need of housing (more units, major repairs) while the lack of independent and long-term care for seniors is truly a crisis. See more detail on my blog post, [If I had \\$150 million](http://www.yellowknifecentre.ca/category/blog/)

I would like to see the government invest in enterprises that have greater job multipliers than road construction, including building housing, early childhood development, agriculture and renewable energy, to name a few.

There are also better alternatives to cuts available in the form of revenue generation. The Department of Finance produced a revenue options paper that details some of the possibilities. Rather than dismissing all of them because of their impact on the cost of living, I think we should take a close look at those options that will capture greater returns on what we tax now. Few people are happy to see their taxes go up, but cuts are a worse option.

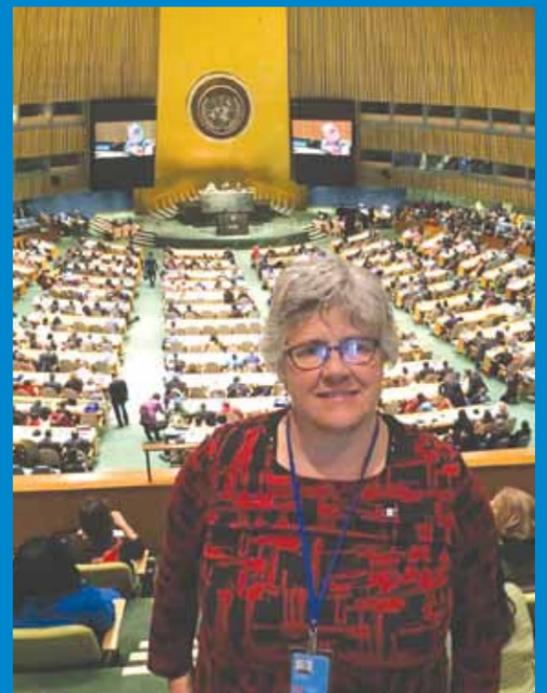
The Department of Finance has been asking people to participate in online budget consultation. Submissions are due by May 20. www.gov.nt.ca/newsroom/news/gnwt-hear-residents-budget-priorities

The demand for these services by our aging population is escalating, and will continue to grow for the next ten years.

It was a challenge to narrow our focus to just three priorities but we thought we would make more progress if we had fewer to work on. Of course, we will also deal with other issues outside these areas when they are referred to us.

Our committee has already met with NWT Seniors, Yellowknife Seniors Society, NWT Literacy, the Status of Women and other organizations to make sure we are in touch with their needs and ideas.

To see our news release on our priorities go to www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/documents-proceedings/news-releases/april-14-2016



Putting women's issues front and centre at the United Nations

I was honored and thrilled to attend the 60th annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York in March. I was there with the GNWT minister responsible for women, Caroline Cochrane, and hundreds of women from throughout the world. The primary focus of this year's meeting was the link between women and sustainable development, with a secondary look at violence against women. To summarize 13 sessions in four days, change in the status of women isn't happening fast enough whether it's parity in political participation or equal pay for work of equal value. Involving women – half the population – is our key to sustainable development goals. There has been some promising work done in Australia on addressing women's inequality as a first step to ending gendered violence. Read more about what I learned in New York on my blog www.yellowknifecentre.ca/category/blog/

AVENS—A Community for Seniors

In the face of increasing demand for independent and long-term care, Avens—A Community for Seniors remains the NWT's centre of excellence for elder care in the Yellowknife.

A recent study by the territorial government shows the supply of seniors housing units and long-term care beds is already far behind demand and will only get worse. There will be a shortfall of 123 long-term care beds in Yellowknife by 2026.

The GNWT has been publicly speculating on how to meet expected demand. Contracting for-profit service providers is an option included in the recently released NWT Long-term Care Program Review. I don't think that's the way to go.

It's possible to reduce costs by paying minimum wage to caregivers and cutting back on the quality of programming. But research shows that low-cost care more often results in extra hospitalization of seniors and an increased mortality rate.

Avens is a proven provider of the best quality services for 30 years, with one of the highest service accreditation scores in the country. Avens stresses service to people, not service to shareholders. Their volunteer board of directors are members of the community

Preparation of the Avens site has already been carried out to enable construction of the pavilion to provide more care beds. Avens has the experience to be the NWT's solution to the lack of long-term care beds. Government should continue to rely on Avens' excellence and make them the choice for meeting future needs.

Avens was created in 1983 as YACCS—the Yellowknife Association of Citizens Concerned for Seniors. YACCS lobbied

government to establish programs and services for seniors, and to deliver programs for the growing number of older adults who want to live out their retirement years in Yellowknife.

Since then, Avens has worked hard not only for Yellowknife seniors, but for seniors across the NWT.

Highlights of this work include:

- Assisted in the establishment of the NWT Extended Health Benefits Program for seniors.
- Constructed Aven Manor in 1987 – a personal care facility for seniors, serving Yellowknife and other NWT communities.
- Acquired a 35 year lease on the land surrounding Aven Manor and then acquired ownership of that land in 2005.
- Constructed Aven Court in 1992, creating 6 four-plex buildings totalling 24 units of affordable housing for independent seniors.
- Assisted in the development of the NWT Seniors Society and the Yellowknife Seniors Society, which are now strong, independent partners of Avens.
- Constructed the Baker Community Centre in 1995. The Centre is operated by the Yellowknife Seniors Society (YSS). YSS works to provide programs and services in support of seniors' wellness.
- Constructed Aven Ridge in 2007 – four duplexes totaling eight new housing units of affordable housing for independent seniors.
- Constructed the new territorial dementia facility called Aven Cottages. The new facility was built by the Government of the NWT and is operated by Avens. The new facility started accepting residents in March 2010.



I took part in the Priorities and Planning Committee hearing that received a presentation from NWT Seniors Society President Leon Peterson and Executive Director Barb Hood. The Society stated its opposition to privatization of long term care for seniors and emphasized its priorities: lowered costs of living, safe communities free from elders abuse, preservation of the extended health care benefits for seniors, and elimination of inequalities in access to services.

Respite care is a key service that gives families and caregivers a break from the 24/7 responsibility of caring for a senior family member. Four beds in Avens Cottages and the Manor are reserved for respite care.

Avens' Elders Circle offers daytime programming for clients who want to remain independent at home. Seniors have the opportunity to visit Avens, make new friends and participate in activities that may not otherwise be available to them.

The Recreation Therapy Department also provides a variety of programs to the residents in Aven Manor and Cottages, seven days a week with day time and evening activities.

With all this to offer, Avens is the obvious partner for delivering high quality care, providing good jobs contributing to our economy, and meeting the demand for more spaces for our respected elders.

Your Input is Important

I need to know what you think and what actions you want to see.

Julie Green

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