

**Foster Families Partnership with the
Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories**

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about foster care and the important role that the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories has played, and will continue to play, in partnering with Child and Family Services to improve recruitment, training and support for foster families.

Foster families perform a vital service to children that must be placed in care. I want to recognize and thank all foster families from across this territory for the valuable support they provide to our children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, for the past several years, the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories has worked to recruit foster families, has offered support, assistance and training to foster families, has organized summer camps for foster children from across the Northwest Territories, and represented the perspectives, needs and concerns of foster parents in meetings and conversations with the Child and Family Services System.

The Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories was established by concerned foster parents from across the territory, and provides an important voice for foster families. Today, the Coalition is releasing a new recruitment strategy and video to recruit new foster and adoptive parents across the NWT. This initiative is in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services.

Using the catchphrase We Need You, the Coalition wants to send the message to prospective foster families and adoptive families that they will not begin their journey as foster or adoptive parents alone. In fact, they will become a part of a large

team that is working together to ensure children are receiving consistent and quality care with a goal of family reunification and permanency. It is vital that we have more foster and adoptive families in the NWT so our children have the chance to be placed in a home that suits them best, when they need one.

Mr. Speaker, foster care is one of the key areas identified by the Auditor General of Canada in their report, tabled this past December as needing to be improved, and it is a priority area for the Department of Health and Social Service's Quality Improvement Plan. As part of our quality improvement work, the Department has established a foster care quality working group.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to advise that the foster care quality working group will be co-led by the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories.

The working group will recommend improvements to the foster care system, addressing the need to provide more consistent support to foster parents across all regions and to improve foster care training for all NWT foster parents; so that foster families have better information and strategies as they respond to the important needs of children in care of the child and family services system.

Mr. Speaker, I want to formally acknowledge our partnership with all foster families, and with the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories that represents the interests and concerns of our foster families. We look forward to continuing to work together with them through the foster care quality working group to improve support, training, and services to foster families so that we can make sure that every child and youth in the NWT is safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.