

MLA alleges misspending for travel

Ministers' failure to pay for family on charter flights to bridge opening party violates GNWT rules: Hawkins



ROBERT HAWKINS: Is blowing the whistle on what he calls an ethical violation on the part of GNWT cabinet ministers who brought family and friends with them on a government charter plane to the Deh Cho bridge opening on Nov. 30.

by **Laura Busch**
Northern News Services

Territorial cabinet ministers who brought their families on government charter flights to the launch party for the Deh Cho Bridge on Nov. 30 may have violated territorial policy and worse, are in an ethical violation of using public funds for private reasons, alleges Yellowknife Centre MLA Robert Hawkins.

Hawkins is specifically calling out Transportation Minister David Ramsay, saying he should have known better than to fly his family to Fort Providence for the opening date without paying their way.

"Quite frankly, he was the well-articulated voice of ethics and right-doing last term continually and now, this

minister to look into a possible breach of government policy for cabinet ministers having non-government passengers on government charter flights.

Under the directive, titled FAM directive #3307, non-government passengers may fly on a government charter flight as long as a written agreement is made to pay for costs associated with travel, among other stipulations.

"Basically, there is a clear violation of the policy and there was no response or intent, in my view, to comply with it before they were caught," said Hawkins.

Hawkins said he believes at best, there was a serious ethical violation and he wants to see this addressed publicly. He added that he had raised his concerns with cabinet a

month after the plane ride but has yet to receive a response from any cabinet minister.

"Even as of today, I've not been informed that they've paid at all," said Hawkins Wednesday. "And the public purse should not absorb this cost."

Yesterday, Department of Transportation spokesperson Earl Blacklock told *Yellowknifer* that a decision has been made by the government that all three cabinet ministers who brought family members on chartered aircraft will be required to pay \$120 for each non-governmental passenger.

Nonetheless, Blacklock disagrees with Hawkins' assessment, saying that taxpayers did not foot the bill for non-government travel to Fort Providence for the Deh Cho

Bridge opening.

"I don't think public money really did pay for it — we had room," he said. "If we hadn't had room ... it wouldn't have occurred."

Two Air Tindi aircraft were chartered by the GNWT to transport approximately 45 passengers to Fort Providence and back on Nov. 30, according to documents attached to Hawkins' letter to Miltenberger. A *Yellowknifer* reporter was on board one of the planes but to date, has not been asked to pay.

Blacklock said even without the extra passengers, two planes would have been used for safety purposes.

"When you've got so many cabinet ministers, you make sure they're divided between two planes," he explained. "If

the worst happened and one of those planes went down and we lost everyone on board, we can't have the entire cabinet on one aircraft."

by **Katherine Hudson**
Northern News Services

A 39-year-old woman was sentenced to five months in jail

at Canadian Tire, Shoppers Drug Mart, the Yellowknife Downtown Liquor Store and Deh Cho Land Jewellery.

pants as the Crown prosecutor read out the agreed statement of facts.

On April 25, 2011, Val...

was stopped outside the store and the tools were recovered.

On Jan. 10, 2012, at about 4:30 p.m., RCMP received a

ing with staff at the Yellowknife Downtown Liquor Store. Martel fled the scene and left behind a black van, which

hope... She just needs to make better choices," said defence attorney Gary Wool.

The social club was established...

Female thief sentenced to five months

Rose Martel targeted Canadian Tire, Shoppers Drug Mart, liquor store and Barren Land Jewellery

... continued to five months in jail