

### **Legislative Assembly accepts ruling on Human Rights complaint**

**(Yellowknife) September 27, 2016** - On September 22, 2016 the Northwest Territories Human Rights Adjudication Panel issued a decision regarding a complaint against the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories by Ms. Elizabeth Portman.

Ms. Portman's complaint related to an incident in November 2013 when she was unable to access the restroom for disabled persons at the Assembly due to the heaviness of the glass and wooden doors leading to the restroom. The Adjudicator found that this inability to access the public washroom resulted in injury to Ms. Portman's dignity, feelings and self-respect, and has ordered the Assembly to pay \$10,000 in compensation to Ms. Portman.

"The Legislative Assembly accepts the decision of the Adjudication Panel and will comply with it fully," said the Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. "This has been a valuable learning experience and one that has resulted in significant improvements to the accessibility of our building by all members of the public. I sincerely regret that Ms. Portman suffered the indignity that she did in 2013."

Prior to and following the complaint, the Assembly has implemented the following accessibility improvements to its building:

#### **2012-2013 – National Building Code Upgrades** (\$80,000 in expenditures)

- Completed doorway modifications and upgrades to comply with the width requirements of the 2010 National Building Code, which included the installation of ten new tempered glass doors and associated hardware, installation of two new wooden doors at the entranceway of the Public Gallery and associated hardware, and adjustments to existing building infrastructure related to wheelchair accessible washrooms and seating in the Public Gallery.

#### **2014-2015 – Phase 1 Upgrades** (\$85,000 in expenditures)

- Installation of electrically assisted door opening mechanisms on two ground floor accessible washrooms, on glass doors leading to the Legislative Library and to Committee Room A;
- Installation of companion seating in areas of the Public Gallery reserved for persons using wheelchairs; and
- Removal of the glass door leading to the public washrooms.

**2015-2016 – Phase 2 Upgrades** (\$150,000 in expenditures)

- Installation of electrically assisted door mechanisms on access doors to Members' Offices, Executive Council Offices, the hallway behind the Chamber, the hallway to Committee Room B and to the Office of the Clerk.

“As the ‘Place of the People,’ the Legislative Assembly should be accessible to all residents of the Northwest Territories. We will continue to review and make improvements to the Assembly building as we move forward into the future,” said Speaker Lafferty.

Although not included in the Adjudicator’s order, the Legislative Assembly has scheduled human rights and duty to accommodate training for its staff commencing in October. Improvements have also been made to the signage for accessible seating in the Public Gallery of the Legislative Chamber.

For further information, please contact:

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