

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

DIVERSIFYING THE ECONOMY

February 22, 2016

MS. GREEN: The government has sounded the alarm about the impact of weakened markets for non-renewable resource products and the need to broaden the base of our economy. The Commissioner's Opening Address referred to the need for strategic investment, diversification, and modernization of the economy in its growth sectors. I agree.

The growth of sectors outside of non-renewable resources is impressive. Tourism contributes over \$100 million and has good potential in every region. The contributions of the forestry, fishing, and agriculture sectors, while small, have posted the largest growth rates of any sector in the past five years. The manufacturing sector has increased by 26 per cent over five years and at \$10 million, shows great prospects for growth in the renewable energy sector. Forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture have also posted significant gains at almost 14 per cent in five years and are now worth a combined total of \$29 million. The Yellowknife Farmers Market is a million dollar enterprise that didn't exist five years ago.

Bear in mind that these are the jobs that provide the greatest return on investment. One million dollars invested in the oil and gas industry results in just 0.5 jobs, while the diamond industries creates 1.1 jobs for \$1 million dollars spent. Compare that to the forest sector where \$1 million dollars returns a whopping 23.4 jobs.

Locally-owned enterprises offer the greatest multipliers and provide more stable, accessible and longer term jobs. They have a smaller environmental footprint by replacing imports, thus reducing the cost of living. Communities with locally-owned small enterprises have lower crime rates, use fewer social services, have better public health, maintain cultural continuity, and have lower rates of poverty, according to recent research commissioned by Alternatives North, and perhaps above all, any success in diversifying our economy gives our territory greater stability. It fights the non-renewable resource sector boom and bust.

Where this government can make a difference is in promotion of those renewable resource sectors. Small investments can provide major returns in reducing food insecurity, addressing energy costs through the introduction of renewables, and generally lowering the cost of living and the need for big paycheques.

As we turn to considering our economic supports and infrastructure spending, let's target our money where it will do the most good, producing the most durable jobs for dollars spent, and producing the most social good with the least environmental harm. I will have questions for the Minister of Lands.