

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

SENIORS' HOUSING SHORTAGES

February 22, 2016

The NWT's population of older adults is projected to grow dramatically in the next ten years. The number of adults over age 75 across the NWT is expected to double, and here in Yellowknife it's expected to triple. These numbers come from a strategic plan developed by Avens: A Community for Seniors.

If we want these seniors, along with their transfer payments and consumer spending, to stay in the NWT, we need to offer them affordable housing.

Instead of enjoying a comfortable and secure old age, many seniors in Yellowknife face long waitlists to access the housing they need. A total of 54 people are on the waiting list to get into Aven Ridge and Aven Court. They're going to wait a long time for those 32 units. In fact, if you join the list today, you may wait as long as six years for a unit to become available.

Meanwhile, people who are unable to live independently are also waitlisted for long-term care at Avon Manor and the Territorial Dementia Facility.

The situation of people who are waiting for long-term and dementia care is especially trouble. Here's why: One of my constituents has been living independently all his adult life. He's now in his late 60s. But he's developing dementia. He lives alone. Sometimes he walks away from where he lives very late at night, not dressed properly for the weather, confused and unable to find his way home. His dementia is putting him in danger. Family have been helping. They take turns cooking for him and they take him to medical appointments, but they have full-time jobs so it's hard to keep him safe on a 24-hour-a-day basis. Neighbours keep an eye out for him, too. His doctor believes the best place for him to go is the Territorial Dementia Facility, but it's full. He was offered a spot in Fort Smith, but his family said no because they all live here in Yellowknife and he has lived here all his life. He doesn't know anyone in Fort Smith. His family is worried that he is now at the bottom of the waiting list because he won't move.

The GNWT informally committed \$12.5 million to building an athletes' village for the 2023 Canada Winter Games with an additional matching amount from the federal government. Now it looks as if we won't need an athletes' village because there isn't enough public support to bid on those games. May I seek the unanimous consent to conclude my statement?

Now it looks like we won't need an athletes' village because there isn't enough public support to bid on those Games, but we still need the housing. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for Seniors about committing money pledged for the athletes' village to seniors' housing.