

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES FOR WHATI

June 2, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Recently, the GNWT's Department of Transportation applied for permits to build an all-season road to Whati. The proposed 94 kilometre road will connect the community of 500 people with Highway 3 and the NWT road system. And it will stop within 50 kilometres of a poly-metallic deposit owned by Fortune Minerals that may one day become a mine. Still, Fortune Minerals needs to raise \$589 million to make that dream come true, and its stock is trading for pennies a share.

The hitch is that the GNWT doesn't have the money to spend on the road to Whati or any other road. Hence, the cuts announced in yesterday's budget aimed at creating an operating surplus over the next four years of \$150 million, which in turn which may be leveraged by matching federal funds and/or borrowing.

But is a road what Whati needs most right now? There are several indicators that this piece of infrastructure is not their most urgent priority. First, take a look at housing. According to GNWT's Housing Survey from 2014, Whati has the second greatest need for housing, second only to Gameti. The survey shows that 45 per cent of housing in Whati is inadequate, meaning it lacks one or all of the following: running water, an indoor toilet, bathing and washing facilities, or it needs major repairs. An additional 24 per cent of housing is unsuitable, meaning that it does not have enough bedrooms for the number of people who live in the home.

CBC News recently reported on a Whati woman who lives in a house with no running water and no toilet. Spring runoff is followed by the growth of mould under the house, and the smell contributes to the woman's health challenges. Her doctor has appealed to the NWT Housing Corporation for a house that is adequately heated, free of mould, and has hot and cold running water, but there isn't a house available to her for various reasons.

If we take that \$150 million the Minister is trying to acquire as an operating surplus and divide it by each of the people in Whati, they would each have \$300,000 to spend. That money would buy a lot of housing, obviously, but that is not what the government has in mind. When the time comes, I will have questions for the Minister of Finance about how the decision was made to prioritize the road to Whati. Thank you.