

JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

JUNE 15, 2016

**MOTION 19-18(2):
NEED FOR A NEW HOUSING STRATEGY**

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Whereas the right to have a home is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as necessary for our health and wellbeing;

AND WHEREAS there are 15,000 houses in the NWT and one-fifth of them are unaffordable or unsuitable or inadequate;

AND WHEREAS this chronic deficit has not been reduced in the five years between the 2009 and 2014 NWT housing surveys;

AND WHEREAS the core housing need for Canada as a whole is 12 per cent;

AND WHEREAS Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation funding for the operations and maintenance of social housing is declining and scheduled to end in 2038;

AND WHEREAS there are 738 families and individuals on the waiting list for affordable public housing in the NWT;

AND WHEREAS our mandate for the 18th Assembly calls on Government to increase the availability of safe, affordable housing;

NOW THEREFORE I move, seconded by the Member for Deh Cho, that the Government of the Northwest Territories make a commitment to reducing the level of core need for all NWT housing by two per cent per year for four years so that we can meet the national average;

AND FURTHER that the government make investing in social housing a priority;

AND FURTHERMORE that the government increase lobbying efforts to restore CMHC contributions for operations and maintenance and that the GNWT organize its own spending to take maximum advantage of federal funds available;

AND FURTHERMORE that the government develop a comprehensive and fully costed strategic plan to achieve these goals and provide the plan to the standing committee on social develop at the earliest opportunity;

AND FURTHERMORE that the government provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Motion is in order. To the motion. I'll allow mover to speak to the motion.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I rise today as the mover of this motion aimed at addressing the deplorable state of housing endured by too many of our citizens, and disproportionately by our most vulnerable citizens. The purpose of this motion is to demonstrate the determination of this Assembly to take action to improve the state of our territorial housing stock: its suitability, adequacy and affordability.

It is a priority of the 18th Assembly to increase the availability of safe and affordable housing and create solutions to address homelessness.

As this motion states, the prevalence of core need in our housing stock, both publicly and privately owned, is large and trending larger.

The 2014 NWT Community Survey provides information on the condition of all housing in the NWT by examining nationally accepted indicators, including suitability, adequacy and affordability. I know we've talked about this today Mr. Speaker, but I'll just briefly go over them again. Suitability is defined as having the appropriate number of bedrooms for the number of occupants as determined by the National Occupancy Standards. Adequate housing must have running water, an indoor toilet, bathing and washing facilities and must not require major systemic repairs. Affordable housing costs less than 30 per cent of net household income.

If a dwelling does not meet one or more of these conditions: suitability, adequacy or affordability, the dwelling is considered to have a housing problem. If a dwelling has a housing problem and a total household income below the core need income threshold, it is considered to be in core need. The data points out that the chronic deficit in core need is not improving, and it won't improve until we get serious about meeting the housing needs of our citizens.

The available data, and our motion, indicate that there are 15,000 houses in the NWT and that one-fifth of them are unaffordable or unsuitable or inadequate; in other words, in core need, and that that compares to a national core need rate of 12 per cent.

As to supply, we know there are 738 families and individuals on waiting lists for public housing in the NWT because it is their most affordable option. The lack of opportunity for affordable accommodation drives the prices of rental housing up in an endless cycle.

This situation hasn't improved for as long as we've been carrying out the territorial housing surveys and that's not surprising. When it comes to capital spending, it's the roads, bridges, fibre optic link, and the so-called economic building blocks that get the lion's share of cash. Two hundred-plus million for a bridge; a hundred million as the territorial share of the road to Tuk and \$85 million for a fibre optic line.

Despite these investments, the GNWT has a public infrastructure deficit of \$3.4 billion dollars as calculated last year. The largest part of that is for roads but the figure also includes hospitals and health centres, and community-owned infrastructure. This is huge figure, Mr. Speaker; twice the size of the territorial budget and it doesn't include the investment required in housing.

Half of the 2400 units owned by the NWT Housing Corporation will need to be replaced in the next 20 years at a total cost of \$600 million. The question is about what order to address these needs in. What are the capital spending priorities of this Assembly? They're stated as the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Slave Geological Province Highway and the Whati All-Season Road, in that order. These are the projects we've repeatedly been told will bring prosperity, employment, opportunity and an end to want for our citizens.

Well, that hasn't happened before, Mr. Speaker, and in our flat economy it's not likely to happen now. The cost of living here in Yellowknife has not been reduced because we have a \$200 million bridge. The Inuvik to Tuk Highway will be completed in 2018, but with the oil and gas industry moribund, that's not going to magically bring jobs to either Inuvik or Tuktoyaktuk.

In all our communities, the prosperity and well-being of our citizens depends most fundamentally on having an adequate and affordable home to live in. Keeping and getting a job depends on having a safe and healthy place to live. Getting to school and being ready to learn,

that also depends on having a safe and healthy place to live. In fact, of course, no one benefits from having substandard housing.

Mr. Speaker, that's the reason for this motion. With it, Members want to send a clear message to this Government, and to the people of the Northwest Territories, that we are serious about making progress on improving housing conditions. And for the purposes of the coming business plans, we are indicating the direction we want this Government to heed in setting future spending priorities.

The motion calls for action in three ways. We are calling on this government to make a commitment to reducing the level of core need for all NWT housing by two per cent per year for four years so that we meet the national average. The government will need to evaluate of the total cost to redress core need at a rate of two per cent a year and attach a dollar value to the work that will be needed annually to achieve this goal. We would hope and expect to see that funding commitment begin in the next business planning cycle. That deals with the adequacy and suitability elements of core need.

Mr. Speaker, there's then supply. Our motion calls on the Government to make investing in social housing a priority. This Government needs to factor in the \$30 million annual investment to replace public housing units. There's another unknown amount of money required to meet the needs of the hundreds of people who are on the public housing waiting list. I want to stress that one of the major justifications this Government makes in putting the case for big infrastructure projects is the employment that will result. This is no less true of a big capital building program for housing. Investing in an increased supply of public housing will put people in homes and, for the periods of construction, will put people to work.

Finally, this motion calls upon our Government to increase lobbying efforts to restore CMHC contributions for operations and maintenance, and for the GNWT to organize its own spending to take maximum advantage of federal funds available. Mr. Speaker, I'm not overstating the case when I say the need is desperate. We want our citizens to prosper and to see an easing in the huge burden of negative social conditions, so many of which can be attributed, directly or indirectly, to poor housing conditions.

We built a \$200 million bridge that provided a negligible, if any, benefit in reducing the cost of living here in the North Slave. How the Members of the day put that project ahead of putting roofs over the heads of our people is beyond me, but this has got to stop. We cannot continue to ignore the suffering, and that's not melodramatic. This does result in suffering of our citizens. We cannot continue to see this trend become worse and worse as the years go on. It's time to call a halt, beginning with this motion today. I look forward to support of Members for this motion. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. I'll allow a seconder, Member for Deh Cho, to speak to the motion.

MR. NADLI: Marci, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of this motion and in seconding the motion. And I'd like to thank my colleague for developing the motion, and I encourage the House to pass this motion unanimously. Housing, of course, is a basic need apart from food and plus at the same time a sense of belonging of human people. And here in the NWT housing is the foundation and plus the very pillar of our society. So it's become a very big issue in the NWT, and you know I think it's about time that we come together to forge a trail to ensure that, you know, the future generations that are coming down the line have a very strong foundation. And here in the NWT, we pride ourselves in being Northerners at the same time recognizing very distinctively and priding ourselves in our homeland. And we need to

reflect upon those very words, our homeland. If we don't have a home, then we don't really have a land. So in that respect, Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of this and encourage all my colleagues to support this motion. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I have to confess that before I was elected I really didn't pay a lot of attention to the housing situation here in the Northwest Territories, but I was certainly shocked when I did look into the 2014 housing need survey. You know, the sort of statistics in here, non-market communities, 44.3 per cent of our housing has problems. 32.3 per cent of non-market communities have housing in core need. That's a third of the housing in non-market communities. People should let that sink in for a minute. Now, when we talk about housing, people need to understand, I think, as that the mover says -- and I want to thank the mover for her efforts on this -- that it does actually create jobs. Construction creates seven times the number of jobs compared to oil and gas extraction, three times the number of jobs compared to diamond mining. Repair and maintenance creates 25 times the number of jobs compared to oil and gas and 12 times the number of jobs compared to diamond mining.

These aren't socialist statistics or come from some crazy source, these are actually from the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics and 2012 NWT Economic Multipliers Report. I'm not making this up. If we want to put our people to work in the Northwest Territories, put them to work building homes and maintaining them. That's what's going to turn our economy around, not big mega projects. But we need to invest in housing. I don't have to make the case for this. The mover and the seconder already did that. When we reviewed the business plans, I was certainly surprised that we don't actually have a plan to bring our housing stock into better shape.

I asked directly the president of the Housing Corporation, "do we actually have a plan to bring our housing out of core need?" No, we don't have such a plan. I was just astounded. In the federal budget, the federal government is actually looking at doubling its investment in affordable housing. They've indicated that they have \$732 million for Aboriginal and Northern Housing in the last federal budget. We don't have a plan to access that funding. We don't have a proposal. Sure, there's guidelines that may still have to be developed, but we don't have a submission ready to give to the federal government to bring our housing out of core needs. That's a failure of our system. We've got to develop that plan. That's what this motion calls for and I implore our Members of this House to support it unanimously. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I speak to support the motion on housing from the Member for Yellowknife Centre, seconded by the Member for Deh Cho. Mr. Speaker, as the motion indicates housing is a basic need. You can't have success in school, you can't have a successful career; you can't follow whatever pursuit you choose as a vocation unless you have a sufficient home. It's essential to the health and wellbeing of individuals and families and frankly the North. In the North, we face significant challenges in many areas of public administration because of our huge land base, widely distributed population, and harsh environmental conditions. And we recognize that the challenges increase our costs in an uncertain economy. But these conditions are precisely why the need for sufficient housing must be a priority. People with safe, secure and affordable shelter will be able to remain healthier, stay in school, be more successful at whatever vocation they choose. Suitable, adequate, and affordable housing is a foundation upon which success in life can rest. For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise also in support of this motion. I think that the housing situation in the NWT is bad. We have situations in our small communities where we have a lot of home ownership units. The survey from the Housing Corporation itself indicates that over 38 per cent of those units are in core need, and the majority of that core need is made up of suitability and adequacy issues. I questioned the way they determine core need with the idea that NWT Housing Corporation has a strong belief and apparently so do the federal government that a person that has a perfectly good home that's suitable that cannot afford it is actually in core need. And I just don't understand that logic, but that as it may be makes this motion important that when the government responds to it and we're asking for a plan, we need to look at that because in reality if you said you wanted to reduce a core need by two per cent per year or eight per cent over the next four years, you can just provide cash subsidies to the 1,800 people on the list that were considering to have an affordability issue only and we're counting them as core need, and we would just eliminate core need or reduce core need much below the national averages by addressing core need by addressing affordability which the Government calls core need.

So I want to make sure that when the government responds to this, that they're responding to it in a constructive way where we can see housing projects, where we can see jobs in small communities and some of the people in these communities that are counted to have core need issue because they have an affordability issue can actually take themselves out of core need just by working. So I think then it's really important that the Government when they put this plan together, if they put this plan together, it's going to be a recommendation from this side, I'm sure, that it includes good projects in the communities, projects where something physical happens so that we have people working on these houses in the communities addressing the core need issues for those specific homes, hopefully addressing some aging in place issues at the same time. It's got a lot of good facets to trying to do some work in housing. I considered to go very well for the employment and especially for the individuals in housing.

You know, public housing people often come to me and say, "My house is in very poor shape." And often my response is, "Well, it shouldn't be." "My house is too small." "Well, it shouldn't be." Because public housing is designed to eliminate core need. We have people in public housing and the Government themselves, the Housing Corporation themselves, indicate that there's a huge issue with suitability in public housing, a huge issue with adequacy in public housing. These public housing units have maintenance budgets, they have extraordinary maintenance, they have retrofit budgets, all of these things that actually supposed to address the housing problem and apparently it doesn't. So when I looked at core need, I'm looking at home ownership and I'm concentrating on home ownership, and that's majority of my work as a regular Member in this Assembly, as a Member on, as a Member on Cabinet, as a regular member previously, the majority of my work has been to address housing needs.

I got into a community and I visit 30 households, 15 of them, 20 of them, are talking about housing, even if it's a separate issue. It always comes back to housing. Everyone has a housing issue. And there's no jobs out there for them to be able to take themselves out of core need. It's an opportunity here for the Housing Corporation to use the money that they get from the Government, from us, and from the Federal Government, and from the GNWT every year to be able to effectively and strategically spend that money on housing where we have benefits, benefits of employment that'll have -- and I've been talking about this forever -- that has a rippling effect, a positive rippling effect, across the communities. If we're able to put people to work, they're able to address these core need issues.

So I think this is so important. I think this is a start. It would be a good start for this Assembly. If we're looking at moving to trying to seriously and strategically spend money and seriously and

strategically try to lower the core needs across the NWT, I think we'll have made a big achievement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Minister of NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might need by glasses for this one. I have some small font here and I'm aging. I just want to make one correction before I begin though. I've heard a couple of times that the 2014 Needs Assessment, Members have quoted it's 32 per cent in housing core need, and that is actually incorrect. 31.7 per cent have a housing problem, but everyone that has a housing problem does not necessarily mean core need. The total core need actually on this assessment from 2014 is 19.8 per cent, so I wanted to correct that to start with. And then to go further with the motion actually, we've been told that we need to get serious, and we are serious about housing within the NWT. The GNWT does agree that we need to look at the goal of decreasing core need to at least the national levels. And we use this point -- and every time we meet with the federal, provincial, territorial meetings we say that constantly that that NWT, Nunavut, and the three Territories of the Yukon Territory have the greatest housing needs and the greatest core needs, so we talk about it all the time. We advocate it all the time, and so we are serious that we need to address that.

The federal engagement however, is really key to doing that. I mean we could build all the houses we want. The reality is that the CMHC funding is declining and will end within 20 years, and if we don't find a way to provide for that operating and maintenance cost we're in trouble, so we do need a plan. And I'll address that later on in my talking. The other thing that I want to talk about is that we have spent millions of dollars from the years 2009 to 2014, we invest \$174 million in capital investment in housing. Of those years, even though we spent \$174 million, from the same time in 2009 our core need was 19 per cent. After spending \$174 million in 2014 our core need was 20 per cent. We actually went up a percentage within that. So we've spent millions and millions and it's still not addressing we have hug needs.

The other thing that I'd like to talk about is that we have made an indent within the communities. Our core need within the community's has actually gone down substantially and at the same time that our core needs of the communities went down, Yellowknife increased. It went from nine per cent to 18 per cent, and that's really about affordability. We don't have rent controls within the NWT and so the Government of the Northwest Territories has no control over what market rent is going for. So people that work in the services industry that are making a minimum wage, \$10.50 an hour, have affordability issues within the market communities because rents are like \$1,500 minimum for one bedroom. So there are huge affordability issues and the Government of Northwest Territories can't control that because we can't control the rental market.

I want to talk about one thing we tried. Some people say is it just about money so we have tried to do a transitional rent program that we gave people \$500 a month to supplement their rent. It was a two-year program. In all honesty, when people say about income support and money, that was kind of a supplement to income support because we were giving people extra money on top. So it wasn't really building housing or fixing housing. It was only keeping people in housing. Within that, we had a really hard time getting the intake for it, even though we advertised weekly in the newspaper for a full year of that. So we needed to work on some communications, but it wasn't done.

What are the drivers of core need? We have huge issues: an aging population that we are facing, limited employment opportunities in our rural and remote communities, Members have spoken over and over in the House about the lack of jobs within the communities and the lack of positions. The government recognizes that. So some of the strategies that they have been

talking about is highways to make people more accessible, to deal with the cost of living, to promote mining, et cetera, looking at fisheries, looking at other enterprises that we can do, diversifying our market. So we are considering it. But jobs are key. Until we have adequate jobs for everybody in the communities, we will always have core need issues.

The other issue we have is really aging infrastructure. We have really old homes. Again, with the lack of CMRC funding, it is declining, so we have trouble meeting all the needs of the people. Huge populations of the community actually rely on public housing. Our needs are bigger than our abilities to deal with them.

We have a host of programs, but really what I want to say is that the federal government, they do recognize that northern housing is a priority. Although, I need Members to realize that we only have 43,000 people within the NWT, and we cover a huge, vast area of land within the whole of Canada. So within that, when we are getting federal transfer payments, it is based on the 43,000 people. We don't have the resources that larger centres in the south have. Our whole population could fit on a couple of blocks in some of the major cities in the south. We don't get the money that they have. However, within this new year, the federal government has given us \$35 million that we will use towards that. They recognize it, and we are advocating strongly.

The housing percentage of money that we spent in the Northwest Territories compared to our revenue, even though we get the least amount -- we only get paid for 43,000 people -- we spent seven times the national average on our housing compared to our revenue than every other jurisdiction. We are spending huge amounts of money, more so than anyone else. But we don't have the revenue base to be able to justify that.

There was a comment made as well that we didn't have a plan, that the Housing Corporation had no plan. In fact, the Housing Corporation has been using a plan. It is called "Building for the Future: Northern Solutions for Northern Housing." They were using that, it was developed in 2012, and it just recently expired. So we are actually looking at doing the survey, like I have said many times in this House, and the results of the survey will lead into our new plan. The plan will be, like I said and I presented in our business plan as well -- we know that CMHC money is gone, and we are working on a 20-year plan, not a three-year plan or a five-year plan, but a 20-year plan, to actually address the declining CMHC funding.

The other thing people have said is we need to step up our lobbying effects and that we have no proposal for the federal government. Actually, in fact, I have met with the other two territories. We have agreed to work in partnership to promote the needs of the Northwest Territories. We haven't got an MOU, but we are in the process of designing it. We have developed a package that is still in draft form, that the three territories have to approve before I will release it, that advocates for the federal money. So the three territories have come together. We are advocating strongly as a group to make the federal government recognize that the territories are different in that we have higher needs and higher costs. Then of course, again, we are going down at the end of this month to actually have the provincial-territorial meetings to address that.

I also want to talk about the definition. It was approached by a Member that we should change the definition of our core need within the NWT. However, I think that is kind of, at this point, not reasonable because the motion is actually looking for us to address our core need to match the national core need. If I change our definition, then I am actually comparing apples to oranges instead of apples to apples. If we want to match their national definition, then we have to use the national definition so that we can actually have a comparable rate so that it is measurable so that we know if we have actually met it. It would be easy to say affordability is a write off. Take everybody that can't afford their places and write them off. I have beat the national core need

because affordability is a core need. When people are making \$10.50 an hour and they are paying \$1500 a month, that is a core need. They cannot afford to do that.

What is really different here, that we do differently in the Northwest Territories that isn't done in the other jurisdictions, is that we don't base it off of just 30 per cent. We consider the affordability, 30 per cent, but we also consider our cost of living. Within our public housing units, for example, people are only paying between four per cent to 19.5 per cent of their income towards rent. Every other jurisdiction that is using this core need are paying 30 per cent. We already are giving people breaks because we are not charging them 30 per cent than everyone else is. We have had the luxury to be able to use our monies to provide programs as we think best for northern people. If I am forced to meet the core need as defined by the national definition, then I have to restructure and look at the programs that we do and say, okay, if we are just looking at those programs and we only want to meet 30 per cent, then I really have to be careful and say, is it the best use to meet that goal that we provide extra programs. For example, the four per cent in the rent charges instead of the 30 per cent. So I have to really caution the Members to be really careful in what they are putting forward with this motion because the NWT Housing Corporation does a lot of programs that are outside just meeting the core need.

We do have some programs, as in CARE-Major, that will give programs -- that are not a cost-sharing. So all of those things might have to come to an end. If my whole focus has to be on just getting down two per cent a year to meet the national core need, then anything extra that we are doing that isn't in the national standards, we need to look if we can afford that, or if we should be taking that money and putting it towards the core need that the Members wish so that we can become a national standard but really not addressing the needs of the people within the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Sahtu.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to rise to say that I will support this motion. But on the basis of this challenging issue of housing throughout our 33 communities, I know in listening to previous government statements there, it is a department that is surely putting its best efforts forward based on the resources it has. It goes on a 360 scenario where you come back to where it is, just a lack of resources.

It kind of disturbs me to use other industries and multipliers to emphasize the needs for this one and the creation of jobs. Addressing this hidden benefit that we do not recognize in our cash flow and in our general accounts is the benefits created by the Norman Wells oil feed. The Norman Wells oil field has been producing a magnitude of benefits to the federal coffers. If we had another field like that, rest assured, then we could have measurables to prove that that industry works and generates prosperity for this government, in turn injecting more programs into the communities.

I ask -- and I will reply to my question in saying I see on a daily basis over 100 direct jobs in the community of Norman Wells for Imperial Oil, that is not to mention the supply chain management system in place to support the community and support that industry. So if you included that additional workforce, it will be much higher. The town of Norman Wells realizes over \$300,000 in quarry fees. That is additional and over and above. There is an incremental amount of benefits out there. For those reasons, I think we have to keep our options open on industry creation of benefits that lie within this high-potential part of Canada. I make that statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly the issue of core need is a complex one. And I don't think any Members of this Assembly underestimate how challenging it will be to solve. But what this motion does is provide clear direction that is both measurable and achievable to this Government to address a serious problem here in the NWT. And if it is true that the national core need statistic doesn't apply to the North, well my constituents don't feel it that way. They're looking for relief in terms of affordability, and I think the same can be said for many of the constituents, at least the Regular Members, constituents. And we've heard we need to do more and that is why I stand in support of this motion and why this motion's being debated today, because we do need to do more to create affordable, safe, secure housing for Northerners.

This motion doesn't commit this Government to any spending, it commits the Government to action, an action that can be clearly communicated with Northerners. But what we are doing to make a difference in their lives and make a difference to bring the North in line with the national standards and celebrate an improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the people we serve. And for that reason, I encourage all Members of the Assembly to support it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. I'll allow the mover, Member for Yellowknife Centre, to conclude her remarks on the motion. Oh, sorry, we do have another member to the motion. Minister of Finance.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that we hear a lot about, I mean in all my time here, and having had the opportunity to be the Minister of Housing and work in the housing field for over half of my life, I mean I understand some of the challenges that the housing across the NWT is facing. I've said it before and I'll say it again, that I will put the condition of our units up against anywhere in the country. There are some challenges. Is it perfect? No. Does it need some work? Yes, it does. But it's an ongoing process. And for those that have been around for a while and been involved in housing for a while, know that it's an ongoing process.

One of the things I would like to see, if we do have another community needs survey, is have one that's not so much opinion-based. Because if I went to all 19 Members of this Assembly and asked you is there anything wrong with your house, we'll always say yes, because as good as you keep it there's always something wrong with your house. It's a challenge that I think this Government's willing to meet and I think the Regular Members have pointed out that it is a challenge that they want to see this government met. The reason I stood up is to say, because this was direction to Cabinet, we will be abstaining from the vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to be brief on this. A couple things come to my mind. If core needs keep on going up when we keep on spending money on this, then we're doing it wrong. I honestly think that we need to be looking at how our Housing Corporation is doing the job and working with the people to make it more efficient. My other challenge I have is we look at cost-saving measures by bringing modular homes in, but we don't take into the fact the income support or the money that's being taken away from people working. So, again, this is a challenge. When I look at the survey done by the Housing Corp, they talk about the social programs, talk about accountability, there's no problems there. But when we look at it adequacy problems, suitability, were huge in these areas. Where actually it, what is it here, 19.4 per cent in public housing as an issue. And we're at 19.8 per cent for total core needs as an issue.

So, again, I think the Government needs to look at it. And I agree with the Finance Minister, we need to do it right. So if we're going to go in and do surveys, it's great that we're going out and asking people for their opinions, but let's actually do it right and get it done right this time so we don't have these challenges in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. I'll allow the mover to conclude her remarks on the motion.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I've been involved with housing issues for many years before I came to this Legislative Assembly. And I have seen people live in want of a decent place to live, to succeed in their lives. I have often said that you can't expect much from someone who doesn't have a house or who lives in overcrowded housing and housing that is in very bad repair. How will they get out of bed in the morning to go to school? How will they get the rest they need to do their jobs?

Mr. Speaker, an important moment for me was at Christmas when a house burned down in Tuktoyaktuk. And there was a picture of it on the CBC News website. And, Mr. Speaker, that house was the size of a normal living room. And the story reported that 12 people lived there, 12 people lived in that house in Tuktoyaktuk. Their family was going to have to take them in because they had nowhere to live, which meant that overcrowded conditions would become even more overcrowded.

This Government puts out hundreds of millions of dollars for health and social services, education, economic diversification and so on. But if people don't have the basics, all we're doing is sticking a band-aid on this problem. We need to address the basics of this problem. I recognize that this problem is different in different places. In Yellowknife it is affordability. In the smaller communities it is suitability and adequacy. And so whatever plan that the Housing Corporation is going to come up with, and I'm sure that the Housing Minister is engaged in that at this moment, it has to address the different issues in different places.

I recognize that this is a potentially overwhelming problem, the numbers are so large, of houses in need, people in need, and the money required to get on top of all of this, but we have to try. We just simply do have to try. And we have to be strategic and ask the Government to be strategic, to work with them to create a successor to the Building for the Future plan and roll this discussion into consideration of that strategic plan to come up with tangible measures to reduce the core housing need, which is ultimately the right measure for this problem. So I appreciate the support of my colleagues. I'm disappointed that the Cabinet will abstain on such an important and fundamental issue, and I'd like to request a recorded vote. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. A recorded vote has been requested. All those in favour, please stand.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Ms. Green, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Vanthuyne, Mr. Blake, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Testart, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Thompson, Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Moses, Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. McLeod - Yellowknife South, Mr. McLeod - Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Schumann, Mr. Sebert.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi, Mr. Clerk. The results of the recorded vote: in favour, nine; opposed, zero; abstentions, seven.

---Carried

