

## **MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

### **PUBLIC HOUSING SHORTAGE**

**October 13, 2016**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all Members will have experience advocating for constituents in need of public housing. In my riding, issues around public housing are especially acute. I have a higher than Yellowknife average number of low-income earners along with people who are unemployed or hard to employ, especially when compared to the city's prosperous suburban ridings. Of all the many requests I get from constituents for help of all kinds, I estimate that housing issues make up 80 per cent of the total.

The issue for this group is not usually affordability because public housing rent scales apply. Adequacy of housing is a big issue, too many people in too small a unit. But, above all, it's availability. There simply isn't enough housing. A report from 2015 year-end indicated there were 180 single parents across the territory on the waiting list for public housing. While they wait, these families may be living in crowded conditions with extended family, divided into small groups and couch-surfing, or tolerating violent relationships in exchange for having a place to live. Colleagues, you've heard me say before that having a home is the starting point for success, whether you are working, attending school, or making other productive choices.

I want to share the story of one of my constituents to illustrate the point that housing availability is at a crisis point for single-parent families. My constituent has been living in a tent since the beginning of the summer. He is the father of two children, aged 12 and 17, who are trying to stay in school by couch-surfing with anyone who will have them. As a homeless single parent with school-age kids, he scores high on the rating system to be next in line for a unit, but so do many others. Since the summer, he has been bumped in and out of first place by people who are in even more desperate need than himself, if you can imagine that. The Minister's office has worked hard on this file, and my office has put a lot of work into offering a solution, but, in the end, there was nothing to do but to wait and hope that his place on the list will coincide with a unit becoming available, and, in fact, that happened this week.

We know all this stuff. I'm not saying anything new. That's why it's part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly's Mandate. That's why it's one of the three priorities of the Social Development Committee, and that's why we passed a motion calling for an annual two per cent reduction in the core need of housing over the next four years. Mr. Speaker, this problem is not going away and it won't until this government invests in making more public housing available in Yellowknife and across this territory. Mahsi