

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE LIVING WAGE

June 2, 2017

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I welcome the changes that are coming to the NWT Child Benefit, and I appreciate that fact that there will be a group of people who have modest incomes who will now receive more money as a result of this benefit, and that is a good thing.

I want to give a little perspective, though, on how much money it actually costs to live in the NWT, and in Yellowknife in particular. A known profit organization here in Yellowknife contracted an economist to figure out what the living wage would be in Yellowknife, and in 2015, the answer was that family of four with one child in school and one in childcare would need \$80,000, and that would only cover their basics: food, shelter, childcare, transportation, clothing, and so on. What I want to underline here today is that income assistance, even with the addition of the child benefit, is still going to keep people in poverty who are now in poverty, if they are on income assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the living wage is based on the premise that no one who works full-time should live in poverty, and it offers a systemic solution to poverty by paying people who are working full-time a living wage. This is a campaign that has been undertaken across the country. There has been some uptake in the NWT, but the campaign at the moment is dormant because it has not been funded by the GNWT to continue. I want to stress the potential it has for people to earn enough money to meet their basic needs rather than depending on government handouts, which nobody wants at the end of the day. I would like to just provide that perspective today and to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment in particular, who is now considering changes to a different category, the minimum wage, to consider what it really costs to live here in setting these rates. Thank you.