

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

YELLOWKNIFE TEN-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

September 27, 2017

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. With the help of the federal and territorial governments, the City of Yellowknife recently completed a 10-year plan to end homelessness. The plan includes a comprehensive analysis of the homelessness problem, and a robust set of recommendations to implement over the next 10 years. The next step is to move from planning to implementation with all orders of government at the table.

I want to share what I learned about homelessness from this report. First, homelessness is a problem that is located in Yellowknife, but only one in 10 people who identified themselves as homeless were born in this city. Homelessness in Yellowknife is a territorial issue. Its origins are unemployment, poverty, and a lack of suitable housing in the communities. People relocate to Yellowknife because they want the services and opportunities of the city. Of course, not everyone who migrates to Yellowknife lives happily ever after, and a significant number of people become homeless.

Mr. Speaker, one of the plan's strength is that it was developed with extensive consultation with people who are now homeless, or were recently homeless. While they need a place to live, many people said they also need the supports that will help them hold onto housing they have including help with mental health and addictions.

Ending homelessness is going to require an investment. The plan as presented will cost \$11 million per year over the next 10 years to implement. Once implemented, the investment in housing will return \$5 million a year in savings. Most important of all, 240 people who are now homeless will have a place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the federal government plans to invest the better part of \$600 million in the NWT in the next decade. It can't and won't all go to roads. Some of it must be allocated to social infrastructure, and housing in particular. I want to say again that homelessness in Yellowknife is a territorial issue. This report confirms a point made often in recent years: it cost the government more to manage homelessness than to end it.

What we need next is leadership on homelessness in the form of a commission which would include the mayor and the Housing Minister to implement the plan. We need the commitment from all levels of government to work together on solutions the plan outlines. I will have questions for the Minister. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.