

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES TO INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
POLITICS

June 1, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for tabling your discussion paper yesterday with the title "Temporary Special Measures to Increase the Representation of Women in the NWT Legislative Assembly." I appreciate your leadership in finding a solution to this longstanding injustice. I have spoken often and at length about this issue, culminating in my motion on International Women's Day to set targets for increased representation.

Mr. Speaker, the South Pacific island of Samoa is a democracy with roots the same as ours, in Britain. Samoa started with the same problem of under-representation. After considerable debate, the government amended its constitution in 2013 to guarantee five of 49 seats to women.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT legislature has set a target of doubling women's representation by 2023. That means four seats. All the work that goes into getting women to run and getting them elected will continue. Come the election, let's say voters elected three women, one short of the goal. In that case, the Legislative Assembly would create one additional temporary seat for the four-year term of that Assembly, and that seat would be occupied by a woman. Note that this is an additional seat, so that means the Legislative Assembly would then have 20 members.

The next question is: who would fill that seat? One way to answer that question is to look at candidates who earned the highest percentage of votes, but who were not elected. In the last election, the former Member for Hay River South earned the highest number of votes, but wasn't elected. In the 2011 election, it was Bertha Rabesca-Zoe, from your Monfwi riding, and in 2007, it was Denise Kurszewski from Inuvik Twin Lakes. Another way to fill the extra seat is to award it on the basis of representation by population.

The temporary in the title means just that. The seat, or seats, would be created for just one Assembly. When the next election comes, if the women's representation goal is met, there would be no extra seats. If it's not met, there would be extra seats to meet the goal.

Temporary special measures offer the possibility of a solution to the under-representation of women in this House. I believe that having more women here will encourage more women to run. When women demonstrate their competence, initiative, and tenacity, voters will be more likely to elect them.

Mr. Speaker, as we both know, it's time to take action on this issue, and I encourage Members of this House and the public to read the paper outlining this option and to join the debate. Mahsi.