

JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
New Housing Construction and Funding Programs
Committee of the Whole—2019-2020 Capital Budget Review
NWT Housing Corporation—October 26, 2018

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, could the Minister tell us how many new units will be built in the next fiscal year, anywhere in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If you look on the acquisition list there, the second one from the bottom, you will see a seniors' mixed rent complex. We are looking up to 25 new units for that one in particular. That will be both a mixed market and a public house complex. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the clarification that that's 25 units. I note that there are, if I understand this correctly, four units of market housing in Ulukhaktok and two in Hay River, so the total then is 31 units next year. Is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that is correct.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister tell us what kind of a dent that is going to make in our core housing need in the area of availability? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Obviously, with the new units, it is going to make a dent in terms of core housing needs, but you are going to have to look at some of the other programs that we are doing within the NWT Housing Corporation. I did field some questions in the House during this session about core housing needs and meeting our goal of 250. I mentioned to Members that we are well beyond that with various programs. We are developing a document that we will share to Members to show how we are adjusting core housing need in many areas throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Minister compiling and sharing that document. We know that one dimension of core housing need is to address overcrowding, which is acute in some communities. The houses are very overcrowded, and the only way to un-crowd them is to provide more houses. I'm interested to know: 31 units and not in the most crowded areas, which are in the Tlicho area, how this is going to address that dimension of core need if he has that information to hand. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. By putting these new units, it will help alleviate some of the overcrowding. We don't know the full details or the data of how many people are living in overcrowded houses, but we do know that it is an issue, and we are trying to address it in various ways.

We are also working with the private sector with their investments, looking at building multi-family units and looking at other ways that we can just address the issue. Obviously, we are also looking at a homelessness initiative and other programs within the Housing Corporation. That's about it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Minister can find information on overcrowding in the 2014 Community Housing Survey. That is broken down by community, how many households in each community are experiencing overcrowding. That information is fairly easy to access.

As far as other initiatives to create more housing, could the Minister elaborate on what work is going on with the private sector? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Williams.

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Our program that we are rolling out with the private sector is in Fort Simpson, where there is a huge need for market units. We have a private developer that has entered into an arrangement to bring in three duplexes into Fort Simpson to help alleviate the market needs in Fort Simpson. The delivery is supposed to be in this fiscal year. One unit is already on stream in the community. It came in before the ferry shut down. The other two will be delivered when the ice roads open. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you. I appreciate the detail on that. What is the Housing Corporation's role in the development of these market units? Are they buying the units, and they are going to be the landlord for them? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do provide support under the Rural and Remote Housing program.

Just a little bit further onto what our president and CEO had mentioned on the previous question, we are also closely working with the federal government to hopefully finalize shortly. We are very encouraged with the discussions on our bilateral agreements moving forward, and the co-investment fund, to see how we can all work together to address getting some new builds and building infrastructure in the communities as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I feel like the housing bilateral agreement is like the Sasquatch; there have been sightings, but no confirmation. We are all looking forward to seeing that.

It leads me to my next question. The question is whether the initiatives in the housing agreement will require matching or any amount of funding from the NWT government in the way that other infrastructure is being matched, 25 per cent from GNWT, 75 per cent from Ottawa. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you, I would ask our vice president, who has been heavily involved in the file, to get some of the details. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Vice President Martin.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Minister mentioned, the Housing Corporation is nearing the conclusion of the negotiations for this bilateral agreement. Under that agreement, it is anticipated that there will be a few main components with distinct programs within that agreement.

The Housing Corporation has completed a preliminary assessment of the cost-sharing needs and believes that, for the most part, the cost-sharing details are now available. There are still some components, however, where we do need to follow up and conclude those negotiations to have certainty on the balance of the arrangement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you. Where in this budget do we find the cost-sharing, or if it isn't in this budget, how is that cost-shared money going to be brought online? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Vice President Martin.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The cost-sharing arrangements would be comprised of a combination of the capital dollars that we currently have tabled, as well as our base O and M dollars. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: I am trying to understand that. Will there actually be new money for housing in this bilateral agreement? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Member alluded to earlier about this bilateral agreement, I am anxious myself. We are just working out the details, and I can confirm with the Member that there will be new dollars with the signing of that bilateral agreement. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could we have an estimate of when that agreement is expected to be made public? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can confirm that our staff is going to be meeting with the federal government via teleconference on Monday to discuss further details and hoping that, in the next couple of weeks, we will have something signed and can officially announce and then start working with our partners to get those dollars spent. Thank you.