

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

CHILDCARE AGREEMENT

October 31, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the high cost and limited availability of licensed childcare in Yellowknife. For young families in Yellowknife, the cost of childcare is the second-largest household expense. Parents are paying \$900 per month on average to have one child in full-time care. The other issue is availability. The Yellowknife daycare, for example, has a waiting list of 151 children. They have space for 100 children.

These are basic problems, and they exist in other NWT communities, as well. Childcare is unaffordable, even for parents with two good incomes, particularly if they have multiple children in care. Eleven NWT communities do not have licensed childcare, at all. I made universal childcare a priority during the last election. Universal childcare was included in the mandate, but it was later watered down to read "creating an action plan for a phased-in approach to making childcare more accessible and more affordable."

There are so many reasons for the GNWT to invest in universal, affordable childcare. The first is child development. Second, women could choose whether to remain in their paid jobs or stay at home with their children, making a decision not solely driven by affordability or availability. Investing in universal, affordable childcare even benefits those without small children. It creates a demand for training and additional employment in the childcare field, itself. The NWT Bureau of Statistics estimates that the economic multiplier, a type of return on investment, for childcare services as 9.86 jobs for every \$1 million invested. And, parents who return to the workforce as well as the additional childcare staff are paying taxes and spending.

Mr. Speaker, in its mandate tracker, the government has marked this commitment as "fulfilled." This is ridiculous. Costs have not gone down, and accessibility has not gone up. While Cabinet wrings its hands about adding to the cost of living with a carbon tax; for example, they are okay to leave the high costs of childcare where it is.

The agreement with Canada does not address these issues. The plan I found online—it has not made its way to committee yet--says most of the money will be allocated to professional development. It will apparently create 100 spaces over the next three years; peanuts, even if it was all spent in Yellowknife, and there is no word on how the agreement will make childcare more affordable. I will have questions for the Minister. Mahsi.