

## ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

### QUESTION 580-18(3): HOUSING BILATERAL AGREEMENT WITH CANADA

February 20, 2019

**MS. GREEN:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I spoke about the new bilateral agreement on housing announced in November, and today I have some questions for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation.

One of the goals of the federal strategy for housing is to expand the stock of rent-assisted housing by 15 percent. Does that mean that the number of special housing units in the NWT will increase by 15 percent to 2,760? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under our current agreement with the federal government, the NWT needs to ensure that we preserve at least 1,231 existing community housing units across the Northwest Territories. Currently, we have double that. I know that there are concerns about waiting lists and that the new National Housing Strategy only provides funding to temporarily address the declining federal support for public housing units.

One solution that we are looking at in addressing this, Mr. Speaker, and to all Members, is that we do have this Homeownership Program, and once we get people into the Homeownership Program, then we can start increasing our stock. We are also looking at private investment through the current co-investment fund that we did make an announcement on.

If we can start developing those partnerships and working with some of our private industry and getting people into homeownership, then we can start increasing our public housing units across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** The Minister himself has said that having people in public housing turn into property owners has been a challenge, even with various incentives and training programs. What is the rest of the plan to expand the housing stock, given that the uptake on homeownership has been low?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** As the Member had mentioned in her statement, we are working on finalizing a three-year action plan. We are going to be working with communities. With the Homeownership Program, we are going to try to get into each of our five districts across the Northwest Territories. We are also doing a lease homeownership program, as well, lease-to-own program. For anybody that is in good standing with the Housing Corporation, we can work with them to start leasing to own their housing unit.

All of these programs that we are working on are going to hopefully open up opportunities to start creating new housing units. We are also looking at a disposable program where we are disposing 50 units a year as our goal. That will open up lots so

that we can start building new, improved, energy-efficient units that are going to add to the stock. We have a lot of programs that we are working on with this three-year action plan for the investment of the National Housing Strategy. I think it is going to have an impact throughout our communities across the Northwest Territories.

**MS. GREEN:** Can the Minister assure Members on this side that all of these initiatives that he has enumerated will result in a 15 percent increase in the number of available units across the NWT?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** I think it is the responsibility, not only for the NWT Housing Corporation, our government, but my discussions with Indigenous governments as well as non-government organizations is that we all have to play a part in this. We all have to bring some type of responsibility, bring some skin to the game, so that we can address housing needs across the Northwest Territories. I do know there is a high waiting list, especially here in Yellowknife and in the regional centres. We are continuing to put pressure on the federal government.

One thing that I didn't make comments to is that we are still looking for Indigenous housing funding. We do have a good program with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, but we are trying to bring a stronger voice with all leadership across the Northwest Territories. I can assure Members that we will be making an impact in housing across the Northwest Territories with all of these programs and continued funding from our partnerships with the federal government and Indigenous partners moving forward.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have heard from this government before that we all have a role to play. The fact is we are talking about people who have very low income, people who have finished their work lives and are now seniors, people who are disabled, who are looking for housing. I don't understand what role they are expected to play in creating new housing stock. I feel that the Minister is hiding behind the CMHC declining funding. That funding is not going to decline for another 10 years. Why is the Minister pointing to declining CMHC funding as a reason not to increase the Housing stock? Mahsi.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** As I mentioned, in the agreement with the federal government, we have to ensure that we preserve at least 1,231 existing units. We doubled that already. We have worked hard to get this bilateral agreement done with the federal government. That gives us the flexibility to do some really good work here in the Northwest Territories. We have carved out some extra funding for the co-investment fund. We are continuing to speak with the federal government on Indigenous housing funding and seeing how we can get more funding moving forward.

In terms of the seniors, we are going to have that study. We are going to present that committee tomorrow, actually. Then, also, we have met with the Disability Council and have invited them to this northern housing summit that we are looking at doing to promote accessibility for people throughout the Northwest Territories as we look at building new stock or how we address people living with disabilities in our housing units. We are working very hard to address the concerns that Members have brought up and

assure Members that we will see some positive results moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.