

## MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

### HOUSING BILATERAL AGREEMENT WITH CANADA

February 20, 2019

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, housing is an important issue in Yellowknife Centre, where so many of my constituents are renters. Affordability remains a major issue, with one in seven households overspending on rent in the marketplace. Availability is also a significant problem for people who need rent geared to income. There are long waiting lists at the Yellowknife Housing Authority, Northern United Place, and Avens Court. With these facts in mind, I attended the announcement of the new federal-territorial housing agreement in November with great anticipation.

The agreement is worth \$140 million over 10 years, with money beginning to flow in April. The agreement addresses the three elements of housing need: affordability, adequacy, and suitability. It identifies priority groups for social housing, including seniors, women and children fleeing violence, veterans, refugees, visible minorities, people suffering from mental illness, and those who are homeless.

Mr. Speaker, the new agreement aims to increase the number of rent-assisted units by 15 percent beginning in 2020-2021, and it aims to repair 20 percent of existing public housing units. This is good news, but, again, I am disappointed there are no targets for new Housing Corporation construction, even though the strategy is supposed to expand housing stock.

At a briefing to the Standing Committee on Social Development, the president of the NWT Housing Corporation confirmed that the corporation's rental inventory will stay at 2,400 units. However, there is \$60 million available through a co-investment fund, for non-profits and others to build affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, Regular MLAs are keenly interested in reducing housing need across the NWT. We passed a motion in 2016 that called on government to reduce core housing need by 2 percent a year for four years so that the NWT met the national average by the end of our term. We will know later this year what progress government has made. The NWT Bureau of Statistics is conducting its every-five-year NWT Community Survey this winter. It will give us a snapshot of where we stand. In the meantime, the detail about how the money from the federal-territorial agreement is going to be spent will be worked out in a three-year action plan to be completed next month. This action plan represents a key milestone in meeting the needs of Northerners for more and better housing. I will have questions for the NWT Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. Mahsi