

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LIVING WAGE

March 6, 2019

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The social justice organization Alternatives North just released its updated calculation of the living wage required by families in Yellowknife, and, for the first time, there are calculations of the living wage for Hay River and Inuvik, as well.

The living wage is calculated using a national framework to ensure results are consistent among jurisdictions and over time. The calculation is for the most common family type, two parents working full-time, one child in childcare full-time, and one in elementary school.

Mr. Speaker, the principle of the living wage is that, if you are working full-time, you can afford to pay for the basics. Some people in this House like to say, "The best social program is a job." That is fine, but the job has to pay for accommodation, childcare, food, clothing, and transportation. People working full-time should not need handouts from food banks or subsidized rent.

The analysis released today quantifies the wages required to pay for the basics. Each parent in the Yellowknife family of four has to earn \$23.95 per hour; in Hay River, \$24.75; and in Inuvik, \$23.78. In terms of annual income, that means the two working parents in Yellowknife together need to make \$87,500; in Hay River, \$90,000; and in Inuvik, \$85,000. The number for Inuvik may surprise some people, but it accounts for the fact that two thirds of the population is Indigenous, and they have access to programs non-Indigenous families can't access, such as non-insured health benefits.

Mr. Speaker, what is the government doing to combat the rising cost of living? The government has not provided any new relief for the largest expenses in this budget, accommodation and childcare. In the meantime, there has been an increase of fees and taxes that apply across the board. It is my firm belief that no one who works full-time should be living in poverty. Government needs to figure out how to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem when it comes to stretching the budgets of low income families. I'll have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mahsi.