

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2019 AND THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON INCREASING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

March 8, 2019

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This year's International Women's Day comes at a time of heightened interest in the role of women in politics. This interest started at the time of the last presidential election in the United States, when the most qualified candidate ever to run did not win. It has continued to the present day, when Cabinet Minister resignations in Ottawa have highlighted the highs and lows of political life for women. None of this has gone unnoticed by the women of the Northwest Territories. The Special Committee on Increasing the Representation of Women in our own Legislative Assembly has had great turn-outs at its community hearings. Women want to know how they can take their place in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, there is a pool of women in the Northwest Territories who are eligible, qualified, and willing to run. Meeting the eligibility is simple. Women need to be 18 years old, a Canadian citizen, and a resident of the Northwest Territories for a year. They are qualified to run by virtue of their life experience. "Just come as you are, ladies," said a friend of mine recently elected to the Yellowknife city council. None of us came here knowing everything we needed to know to do this job, but, since women worry about whether they are qualified, it's worth mentioning that women in the Northwest Territories graduate from high school in greater numbers than men and are more likely to have a university degree. For most women in the Northwest Territories, the biggest consideration is being willing to run.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about why it's worth running. I ran after many years as an advocate for housing and women's issues. I wanted to talk about those issues in this House and push for change. Research says other women often run for the same reasons. They are advocates, and they want to pursue those policy issues that are important to women, issues that are not being discussed as often or even at all by men. That does not mean that women cannot or will not talk about economic development, financial policy, or land management. Of course they can, but their male colleagues are less likely to talk about pay equity, universal access to family planning, or violence against women.

Mr. Speaker, this is where women's voices can make a difference, and the more the better. Research indicates elected women promote gender equality and strengthen democratic institutions because women are often willing collaborators. Women also make substantive contributions to the consideration of government spending and population health. In short, women can change the world, not only for women, but for everyone. Women have a right to be in this Chamber, whatever their priorities. They have a job to do shaping policy and making change, but, perhaps most importantly, by being here, they show other women what's possible. If you can see it, you can be it. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.