

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

CLIMATE CRISIS

May 24, 2019

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about climate change, which now, without a doubt, is a climate crisis. I've spoken about this issue before, but today, as wildfires drive people from their homes, I feel a new sense of urgency.

Here's why: The Canada Climate Change Report shows our northern climate is warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world. Further, warming is accelerating and it's effectively irreversible. As people have said, there is no plan to refreeze the Arctic. The cause is carbon dioxide emissions from human activity. We can see the results for ourselves in the Northwest Territories: shorter ice road seasons; thawing permafrost; unpredictable precipitation; and intense wildfires.

Mr. Speaker, I see a real disconnect in my own life. I believe the science, but my response doesn't live up to this emergency. Sure, I do easy things like recycling, composting, and riding my bike to work, but my life hasn't fundamentally changed, and it's time. It's time to take more meaningful action.

Young people are leading the way. They are inspired by Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teenager who started the climate strikes that are now popular everywhere. They believe that the climate crisis is going to dominate their lives and the lives of their children. They want to commit to change. Some students in Inuvik and Yellowknife have started increasing climate crisis awareness with public events such as the one that's here today. They want us, as adults and leaders, on board.

Mr. Speaker, this is a huge problem, but there are actions we can take that will make a difference. Government has a role to play by providing leadership and funding. Let's develop a retrofit economy that will create jobs while reducing energy consumption in our homes. Let's continue to makeover our power grid so that it's green, with additional solar and wind power investments. It's time for an updated version of the One Tonne Challenge program of 15 years ago to get people to change behaviour that's hurting rather than helping the environment.

While we're at it, government could take a close look at its own consumption patterns. What if there was a whole-of-government approach to the climate crisis managed by a secretariat that would look at government's procurement of everything from trucks to roads to assess the impact on greenhouse gas emissions in order to make informed, less harmful choices?

Here's the thing: we are already paying the cost of the climate crisis, so why don't we invest in mitigation as well? There is no downside, so what are we waiting for?