

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

**QUESTION 795-18(3): NEW HOUSING UNITS FOR SENIORS**

**August 13, 2019**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for NWT housing. As I said in my statement, there have been no new units for seniors built in Yellowknife during this Assembly, while, at the same time, the population of seniors has continued to grow rapidly. Can the Minister tell us what plans are in place with funding attached to meet those needs going forward? Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the Member's questions. As Members know, we have done a comprehensive seniors' planning study throughout the Northwest Territories. We did recognize that there are communities across the Northwest Territories that need action addressed to seniors' housing and to help seniors out moving forward. The two communities that we have recognized, as I have said in this House before, are Yellowknife and Hay River, and the other one is Norman Wells. We are looking at creating partnerships with our stakeholders, and, as I have also mentioned in this House, we did get a carve-out for the co-investment fund that we do not have to apply on, that we can work with our partnerships to address the issue.

Moving forward, we are working with AVENS towards a possible partnership for the development of more seniors' housing in Yellowknife at this time. It's probably something that might not take place until the next government, but we are out there. We are working with our stakeholders to address all housing issues. Specifically for seniors, it will be Yellowknife and Hay River at the start, and focusing on Norman Wells and other communities. One big part of that is going to be the community housing plans that we have been addressing and looking at the priorities that communities see are priorities that we need to address, and seniors are going to be part of that.

**MS. GREEN:** I appreciate the Minister's wide-ranging answer, but, if he could provide some specific information about whether there are any projects that are in the hopper with funding attached to meet seniors' needs at this time, that is what I am after.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** We do have a lot of major seniors' housing initiatives. Some of them are the seniors' aging in place retrofits, ongoing seniors' marketing and promoting the campaigns through our district offices to our seniors in the regions. Also, the transfer of a family home program is another one that we have worked on, which facilitates the transfer of family home if a senior does need to relocate due to a medical or other urgent reason. We are also piloting LHO repair services to private residents and not people who are living in public housing units, especially for seniors who have difficulty securing contracts. The CARE program is one that we have been working on, programs for major repairs, preventative maintenance; we also have the fuel tank upgrade; like I

mentioned earlier, Aging in Place; and emergency repairs.

In the 2018-2019 fiscal year, we did approve 540 applicants for repair, for assistance for seniors. We will continue to do that. As long as we get that information out there in our district offices and our staff and as Members representing our seniors can get that information out there, then we can work on assisting our seniors throughout the Northwest Territories.

**MS. GREEN:** No one could say that the Minister is not getting the information out there. Answering the questions, that is another story. Another means to ensure that seniors have appropriate housing in Yellowknife is to assist them with retrofitting their homes, and this is a very cost-effective solution, more cost-effective than providing a whole new place to live. The budget for the CARE program, as one example, for the whole of the NWT is only half a million dollars, so can the Minister tell us how many seniors' households were assisted with retrofits in the last fiscal year?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** There is a lot of work that has been going on in this area, particularly since we have done the seniors' planning study. The Housing Corporation are maintaining a \$2-million funding level in our fiscal framework for 2020-2021 and beyond for the CARE major program. We did supplement the CARE major program with other new homeownership programs introduced via our strategic renewal, which I have mentioned in the House, and previous Ministers for Housing have also talked about this strategic renewal. This new program for seniors commenced in 2017, assisting 37 senior households, and this assisted 103 senior households in 2018-2019.

Historically, spending over the past few years has been in the range of about \$1 million. We expect to have more uptake in the future years as our senior population continues to grow, and we will be making adjustments to reduce the copayment requirements. With any input that we can get from Members, as well as our stakeholders in the communities, to address these needs, we will continue to work and build strong partnerships.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that. At the end of the day, how does the demand for funding for seniors, retrofits, and other kinds of housing initiatives compare with the demand for it? How does the demand line up with the money available? What is the gap between those two? Thank you.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** To be honest, we know that there is a housing issue throughout the Northwest Territories. We have been working and making strides with the co-investment fund that we were able to carve out with our agreement that we signed with the federal government to address housing needs for all of our demographics, populations throughout the Northwest Territories. Of course, seniors is one. We did the Seniors Planning Study. We need to address all housing needs across the Northwest Territories. In this case, we will work with our stakeholders. We will work with our groups and our communities to develop their community plans to address the priorities that they need in housing, and we will continue on that path.

I can say with confidence that the NWT Housing Corporation has done a great job, and

we are working on these agreements to address the housing needs right across the NWT for everyone. We will continue to work that, and we will continue to lobby our federal counterparts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.