

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – JULIE GREEN MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

NWT HOUSING CRISIS

DECEMBER 11, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents of the Northwest Territories are experiencing a housing crisis. That is not news to the 900 individuals and families on the NWT Housing Corporation's waiting list, and it is not news to the 6,308 households that have housing problems, meaning that their house is not in good repair, not big enough for their family size, or not affordable or some combination of these three.

The news is that the housing crisis got worse in the 18th Assembly, despite the Housing Corporation's best intentions for improvement. Mr. Speaker, making public housing available and private housing affordable is a crucial issue in my constituency where two-thirds of my constituents are in public housing or in other rentals. It is also an issue for Yellowknife as a whole. There are as many people on the Yellowknife Housing Authority waiting list as there are units available, about 350. About a quarter of those who are waiting are seniors.

The community survey released last month indicates problems with affordability in Yellowknife have increased to include 2,000 households. In fact, all categories of housing need in Yellowknife have gone up. Mr. Speaker, in the 18th Assembly, I presented a motion, which all MLAs supported, for an action plan from the NWT Housing Corporation to reduce housing problems based on the 2014 survey. The plan was presented two years ago with a goal of assisting 1,000 households across the territory. I haven't seen any reporting from the Housing Corporation that indicates whether this goal was met.

What I do know is that rather than going down, housing needs across the territory have doubled in the last five years. Mr. Speaker, those in need are running out of patience with the NWT Housing Corporation and so am I. I have heard about initiatives from communities and land rights organizations that have taken matters into their own hands, including Deline and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. I understand their frustration. I am also losing confidence in the NWT Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the Corporation is up to the task of providing housing and programming to alleviate the obvious need. What we do know is that the Housing Corporation has steadfastly refused to add any new units to its inventory because doing so would increase overhead costs. This is an unacceptable position. I am asking for an investment in more units immediately. We cannot expect residents to thrive, go to school, and go to work when one of their most basic needs remains unmet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.