

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT — JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
DAY CARE AT J. H. SISSONS SCHOOL IN YELLOWKNIFE**

March 4, 2020

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obtaining licenced childcare is a significant problem in NWT communities, and in Yellowknife, as well. Parents face long waiting lists for space, and the cost is through the roof. In fact, I know of families who get themselves onto waiting lists as soon as the pregnancy is confirmed.

A large part of the problem is finding a building for childcare that meets building and fire code requirements. These are exacting standards to ensure our children are safe and, of course, I have no quarrel with putting safety first. The fact is, however, that it is next to impossible to find space for rent that meets these requirements. Renovating buildings to meet the code is expensive. There is often hazardous material abatement involved, as well as improved fire separation walls and floors.

Mr. Speaker, if there is no appropriate space for licenced childcare in Yellowknife available, what are the chances that there is appropriate space in regional centres, or even in the smaller communities? This is a significant problem, because 11 communities don't have established childcare spaces. One potential solution to this space crunch is to make childcare spaces available in schools when they are being renovated or rebuilt. I think this solution offers significant economies of scale, which will also reduce the costs of operating a childcare facility, and ultimately savings for parents. To be clear, I don't want teachers or government employees to staff these childcare centres. That challenge would be taken up by a non-profit or community group. My request is only for the space itself, and my specific request is that the government take an immediate and close look at providing childcare space at J.H. Sissons because it is due to be rebuilt in the coming years.

Mr. Speaker, the waiting lists for childcare in Yellowknife are very substantial, and they represent a significant barrier to recruiting staff into jobs, not only into government jobs but private industry as well. People think long and hard about coming here because childcare is so unavailable and unaffordable. The bottom line here is that, in order for NWT residents to access childcare, the government is going to have to lead in providing infrastructure. The cost of constructing or renovating buildings is beyond the reach of non-profit budgets. Investing in childcare spaces in schools may be the answer. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.