

## **MEMBER'S STATEMENT — JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

### **Poverty Trap**

**June 9, 2020**

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to talk about the poverty trap today. I have talked about this concept before, but, as a reminder, a poverty trap is a self-reinforcing cycle that allows poverty to persist. In particular, it's a situation in which an increase in income results in a decrease in benefits so that, in the end, you are no further ahead.

Mr. Speaker, this pandemic has been difficult for all of us but particular for people with low or no income. The federal and territorial governments have provided additional benefits to low-income residents. To its credit, the territorial government has permitted income assistance recipients to keep this extra money without reducing its financial support to them. As you will hear later today when the Standing Committee on Social Development tables its pandemic response report, we would like this exemption to stay in place and to increase the limit on keeping unearned income over the year.

Mr. Speaker, a particular problem within the poverty trap is finding affordable housing. I have a constituent who is a single dad with two children who is currently living with family. It's a chaotic and overcrowded situation where it's difficult to get the rest they all need. He has a skill, but he hasn't been able to work because of the pandemic lockdown. What he would like to do is get a job and get a place of his own, but he's running into barriers. The first barrier is that he doesn't have a job right now; he's on income assistance. That more or less rules out renting from the private market as he doesn't have a steady income. Income Assistance will provide a three-month income guarantee, but most landlords want a year, especially during the pandemic. Landlords no longer have the opportunity to evict tenants for non-payment, so they are taking fewer risks. A possible solution is to get into public housing. We all know that the waiting list in Yellowknife and many places throughout the territory is very long. He's been told he's number 20-something on the list. In other words, he's not going to get into public housing anytime soon. Mr. Speaker, my constituent has a skill, and he wants to work. He wants his own place for his children. It seems like a simple ask but it's not. That's a poverty trap. If we want people to not only survive but thrive, we need to identify these poverty traps.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.  
---Unanimous consent granted

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to identify these poverty traps and eliminate them. One solution is to introduce a guaranteed basic income. I will have questions on that point for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.