

**Seniors Planning Study**

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to taking action so that seniors can age in place. We want to ensure that all seniors living within the Northwest Territories have the support and programs they need to continue living in their own homes, if possible, and participate as full members in their community.

The number of seniors in our territory is growing at an extraordinary pace. While the population of the Northwest Territories has grown by one per cent since 2004, the population of persons 60 years of age and older has grown by 53 per cent. This trend is expected to continue well into the foreseeable future compelling us to plan for how these changes will impact all our systems.

Some housing efforts taken by this government to support seniors, with their desire to age-in-place, include the construction of seniors' independent eight-plex housing units in five communities: Aklavik, Fort Liard, Whatì, Fort McPherson and Fort Good Hope. A seniors' aging-in-place retrofit program was introduced, which helps make seniors' homes more durable and energy-efficient. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will soon introduce new multi-generational homeownership units in communities that will have a main floor accessible bedroom designed specifically for families that will be supporting an elder in their home.

These innovative initiatives are already making a difference. The Seniors Aging-in-Place Retrofit Program is now one of the most accessed programs that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation offers. The magnitude of the issue, however, means that we need to continually explore and examine other solutions.

Mr. Speaker, to further inform our government, as well as other governments, private industry, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders and decision-makers, I requested that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation commission the Seniors Planning Study to examine options related to independent housing for seniors.

This Seniors Planning Study is an assessment of seniors' housing in all communities in the Northwest Territories, including current and future needs. The report provides a detailed review of the current context of the senior population, households, and the housing market.

Mr. Speaker, this study is divided into two distinct phases. Phase One of the study focused on reviewing and identifying existing conditions and trends for seniors' housing in the two locations that show the greatest demand: the City of Yellowknife and the Town of Hay River. Part of the methodology for these two communities was to conduct focus group discussions with key stakeholders. We have included the interim report for those two communities in the final Seniors Planning Study document.

Phase Two of the study was conducted as a tabletop exercise focused on analyzing available statistics for seniors' population growth and household formation for all communities in the Northwest Territories. The analysis is at a regional and community scale and reviews opportunities and challenges around seniors' housing in our more remote and isolated areas.

The Seniors Planning Study is broken down into five chapters. The first chapter on Regional Community Overview provides a breakdown of the seniors profile in each region. Housing preferences, indicators and affordability targets were developed based on existing statistical data. The second chapter on Future Projections looks at future population growth for seniors in the Northwest Territories. The third chapter on Community Engagement examines the engagement that was conducted with the City of Yellowknife and the Town of Hay River. The fourth chapter provides a cross-jurisdictional analysis on best practices and case studies around the growth of the senior population in regard to housing design, configuration and senior support programs.

The last element of the Seniors Planning Study are conclusions from the study along with a list of options around the increasing demand for seniors' housing.

Key findings from this report indicate that the majority of seniors aged 55 years or older own their home. However, there are communities across the Northwest Territories where a higher proportion of seniors are in rented homes. One of the key findings of the study was that we can now plan around an increase of approximately 165 senior households annually. The needs of this population are varied and will have to be addressed. Thankfully, we now have this study to help us plan for the seniors' needs in each community.

This information will be factored into the work around the development of 33 Community Housing Plans. Decision-makers at all levels will be able to use this information, as well as the broader context of a Community Housing Plan to inform their infrastructure and planning decisions, especially those communities that are taking a more active role in housing.

Mr. Speaker, seniors are one of our greatest cultural resources. They hold our histories, sustain our traditional languages and customs, and they have given so much to so many. We are committed to ensuring the health and well-being of our elders, and a crucial part of that is housing. With this study, we can improve on the good work already being done to ensure that seniors can remain well-housed, in their communities and with their families and friends. Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the Seniors Planning Study.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.