

Canada-Northwest Territories Housing Benefit

Mr. Speaker, one of the very important values in the new Northwest Territories Housing Corporation mandate is “partnership.” Partnership is how we are most effectively going to address the housing needs of residents across the territory. It is critical that we work in partnership with Indigenous governments, the Government of Canada, community governments and other stakeholders to reach our housing goals.

As we work towards improvement within the NWT HC, I would like to highlight one of the areas that supports addressing core need. Prior to 2021, the NWT HC delivered a program called the Transitional Rent Supplement Program. It was 100% funded by the GNWT and at the time of sunset, it was funded at \$250,000 per year and supported approximately 50 clients across the NWT. In our current bi-lateral agreement with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) provisions were made for the NWT HC to join other Canadian jurisdictions in the delivery of a new Canada Housing Benefit program. The current CMHC bilateral funds this program from 2021 to 2028 and over that time the NWT HC is expected to receive a total of \$9.6 million, which the NWT HC must cost-share.

In 2022-2023 our Main Estimates shows an annual budget of \$2.588 million towards this program, up from \$1.75 million in 2021-22. With that level of investment, the Canada Housing Benefit is currently supporting approximately 250 households across the NWT, and we anticipate that will increase with the additional investment starting in April.

The Canada NWT Housing Benefit, a rent subsidy program, is designed to help households that pay more than 30% of their income on their rent. In place since April 2021, this benefit provides qualified households with up to \$800 dollars per month for rent and is a 50/50 cost share between the GNWT and the Government of Canada, as part of the National

Housing Strategy. The National Housing Strategy is a federal government initiative to address housing need and chronic homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide this House with an update on the good work being done through the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit.

Right now, this benefit is supporting approximately 250 NWT households. This benefit is making a tangible, positive difference in their lives. When the benefit was first offered, the NWT HC received 50 applicants. Now, the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit is oversubscribed by 20%, with more NWT residents expressing their interest in accessing the benefit as time goes on. The NWT HC is currently looking at ways to address this demand. This benefit is clearly meeting the needs to provide assistance in making rent affordable for private market units where they exist in communities.

What all this means, Mr. Speaker, is that someone who worried about being able to pay for childcare next month, now has more room in their budget. It means that someone can cope a little bit better with the rising costs of food and fuel. It means that someone whose work hours have been cut back can still pay their rent at the start of the month.

This benefit also helps the GNWT address the core housing need across the territory, in this case by helping program participants address affordability issues.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical that we continue to look for ways to support our residents to secure safe homes and maintain housing stability. I am pleased that we were able to work with the Government of Canada on this initiative.

Partnership is a theme I have spoken about in this House many times because it is the best way to address the housing needs of the NWT. One government alone can not solve all the territory's housing issues, and despite the success of programs like the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit, there is still a lot more work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister Responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, I will continue to work hard to build and maintain these partnerships so that we can see more and more successes like the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.