

Progress On Housing Mandate Commitments

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide you with a report on the Government of the Northwest Territories' progress on meeting its mandate commitments related to housing.

Under the priority of Cost of Living of the 18th Legislative Assembly, this government is committed to continuing to implement northern solutions for northern housing. Addressing homelessness is part of this commitment.

One of the related actions is our support for the Housing First project in Yellowknife. An agreement was signed with the Yellowknife Women's Society to fund this project in the amount of \$450,000 over three years. This project also has the City of Yellowknife and the federal government as partners. This program has helped move 10 people, both men and women, out of homelessness, and we anticipate that many more will benefit from this project in the coming years.

Construction is also near completion on the building that houses the Yellowknife Women's Society shelter. This project will see the creation of eight new semi-independent units within the building. It is expected that these units will be available for occupancy in November. We are also working with the Salvation Army in Yellowknife to add seven single-room suites in the Bailey House. These units will share a communal kitchen, common room, and washrooms. In smaller communities tenders have closed for the creation of eight independent single room occupancy units to address homelessness under the Northern Pathways to Housing program: four in Behchoko and four in Fort Simpson. These units should be available this December.

This House has also heard me commit to ensuring that there are homelessness supports in all of our regions. Planning to alleviate homelessness in Fort Good Hope is underway and a housing unit there has already been donated to the Yamoga Housing Society for the

purposes of this project. Finally, a comprehensive review of homelessness programming will be completed in the coming months, which will provide important information on how we can do things better and help more people.

Mr. Speaker, boarded up units in our communities are not only unsafe; they occupy valuable land that could be used for other housing projects. I committed that 100 units would be disposed of over a two-year period. I can report that in 2016-2017, 61 units were disposed of; 30 units were demolished and 31 units were sold. There are plans to dispose of 56 units this year.

Supporting responsible utility consumption also contributes to northern housing solutions. To this end, the transformation of the Public Housing utility structure continues. Specifically, electricity subsidies have been revised over the past two years so that tenants have more responsibility over their usage. Information on ways to conserve electricity will be made available at all Local Housing Organizations, and distributed to all Public Housing tenants.

Supporting the housing aspirations of Indigenous governments is also part of the solution in addressing our urgent housing needs. A partnership with the K'atloodeech'e First Nations has led to federal leases being obtained for lots on the Hay River Reserve that will facilitate the delivery of social housing on the Reserve. Another example of an Indigenous government partnership is the sale of surplus units to the K'asho Got'ine Government in Fort Good Hope, which will be used by the community to support their housing aspirations.

Having timely and responsive housing services in our communities is important to ensure that programming is effective and meets the needs of our residents. In terms of community-based property management, three new Local Housing Organizations have been established, in Whati, Gameti, and Fort Liard respectively. Management and administrative offices are open and maintenance staffing is underway for the new Local Housing Organizations. Engagement with these communities is occurring for the establishment of Local Housing Organization Boards and to ensure they have complete membership. In Wekweeti and Colville Lake, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has been partnering with Government Service Officers to provide local

administrative support. Local maintenance services are used to maintain and repair units whenever possible. These developments are helping to build and maintain local capacity with regards to Public Housing in all these communities.

Effective partnerships is key to leveraging our scarce resources. I have worked with our territorial partners in Nunavut and the Yukon to ensure that the federal government understands that we are different in the North. I, myself have engaged directly with my ministerial federal counterparts on a number of occasions, educating them about our northern context, and explaining what support would be useful as well as what we are bringing to the table. In the end, our needs speak for themselves. I will be holding the federal government accountable to assist in addressing that reality.

Another partnership involves ensuring that there is appropriate and consistent housing for community policing. We now have a formal arrangement with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that will ensure that availability of housing is not a barrier to recruiting Royal Canadian Mounted Police members to our communities. These units, which are designed to the specifications of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, will be a mix of duplex and single-family-design homes as specified in a memorandum of agreement.

Mr. Speaker, the Legislative Assembly knows the importance of supporting our Elders to remain in their home communities. Health outcomes are improved when our communities remain intact. To help with this, a Seniors Aging in Place repair and retrofit program has been introduced this year. This program provides assistance of up to \$10,000 dollars annually to help seniors with upgrades and energy-efficient retrofits that will complement our existing repair and maintenance assistance programs.

Good communication with our seniors is critical to ensuring our programs meet their needs and inform them how to participate in our housing programs. Targeted communications campaigns directed at seniors have been successful in increasing the uptake of homeownership programming, especially to the preventative home maintenance program.

Three seniors' independent housing nine-plexes have been built in Aklavik, Fort Liard and Whati. Similar complexes in Fort Good Hope and Fort McPherson are slated for completion

by March 2018 and September 2018, respectively. These complexes provide a safe, secure home for Elders, allow for healthy programming in common areas and have on-site property management. All of these programs and initiatives are helping seniors to remain independent and in their communities for as long as possible.

Finally, developing northern solutions for northern housing should not be done without consulting those that know best: the users of housing programs, our residents. A comprehensive Housing Engagement survey was undertaken earlier this year. Nearly 1,500 surveys were completed, or approximately one out every 10 households in the Northwest Territories, which represents a very successful engagement with people and communities. This invaluable input is being used to guide strategic housing renewal, including the redesign and development of housing programs and services to provide a greater future with adequate, affordable, and suitable housing for all residents of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of what has been accomplished on housing halfway through our term. Although the work is not complete and there are many challenges ahead, I commit to supporting and directing the development of programs and policies that align with the mandate of this Legislative Assembly. I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with Members of the Legislative Assembly, Ministers, and other orders of government, and stakeholders to advance northern solutions for northern housing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.