

Housing NWT Indigenous Government Partnerships

Mr. Speaker, partnerships are key to addressing the territory's housing crisis. Through partnerships with Indigenous governments and communities, we are effectively finding housing solutions that recognize the unique needs of communities across the NWT. As we advance the Housing NWT renewal strategy, I am pleased to report that these partnerships are already leading to real, meaningful work that will improve quality of life for residents.

When this House was last in session, I spoke about the Memorandum of Understanding on Housing we had just signed with the Tłı̨ch̨ Government. Today I am pleased to say that Housing NWT has also signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated.

This MOA provides a framework for intergovernmental cooperation on housing-related matters, including community housing planning, procurement, coordinated program delivery in Sahtu communities, and information and data sharing.

Housing NWT recognizes that the Sahtu region faces significant housing challenges. By working in partnership with the Sahtu Secretariat, we will maximize federal funding, increase affordable housing for residents, provide training opportunities, increase economic activity in the region, and build the capacity of Indigenous governments and communities.

The MOA sets a path for a more collaborative relationship between Housing NWT and the Sahtu Secretariat, consistent with Housing NWT's new approach to Indigenous partnerships under its new mandate.

Mr. Speaker, discussions between Housing NWT and other NWT Indigenous governments are also underway to develop cooperative agreements on housing.

Last June, Premier Cochrane and I committed to a joint review of Housing NWT's policies and programs, with participation of the Council of Leaders Housing Working Group, and it is already changing how we work with Indigenous governments. This is consistent with Article 23 of the UN Declaration that states that Indigenous people have a right to be actively involved in developing and determining social and other programs that affect them.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say through the renewal of Housing NWT and program and policy review we are putting those words into action. We are increasing our engagement with Indigenous governments about the location and design of housing units. We are having open discussions with Indigenous governments on how to maximize economic opportunities that come with housing construction and operation. We are also looking at new partnerships and innovative approaches for building housing across the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, this collaborative work is helping us develop housing solutions that will benefit residents and the communities in which they live. I am pleased to see Indigenous governments seize an increasing role in housing, and that the federal government is now flowing distinctions-based funding to Indigenous governments in the NWT. Housing NWT recognizes that there is no "one size fits all" solution. Individual Indigenous communities and governments have different needs, capacities, and aspirations, and it is important that their housing solutions cater to their unique circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, only through collaboration and partnership with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, and communities will we be able to effectively address the NWT's housing crisis and meet our mandate commitment to increase the number of affordable homes and reduce core housing need in communities across the territory.

Housing NWT will continue to build its relationships with Indigenous governments so that together we can find housing solutions that fit the needs of their residents and all residents of the Northwest Territories.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.