

Indigenous Government Partnerships and Capacity Building

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT has been very successful in building strong partnerships with Indigenous governments over the life of this government, because we have cultivated collaborative relationships with them. This is particularly important with the large amounts of distinctions-based funding that flows directly from the Government of Canada to NWT Indigenous governments for their housing priorities.

The Council of Leaders Housing Working Group, which played a significant role in the review of housing programs and policies as part of Housing NWT's Strategic Renewal, has transformed into the NWT Housing Forum. The Forum will be instrumental in moving the needs of NWT residents forward collaboratively with Housing NWT. The Indigenous co-led Forum has already met twice and is positioned to play an important role in promoting information-exchange and cooperation between all types of NWT governments on housing priorities.

Mr. Speaker, another success that should be highlighted are the formal agreements that have been signed between our government and the Tłı̨chǫ Government, Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated, and the Délı̨ne Gó'ı̨nǫ Government to address their housing needs.

These agreements are tailored to each Indigenous government and will build on existing intergovernmental agreements in place between the GNWT and those Indigenous governments. The agreements acknowledge the relationships and work already done and provide a framework for intergovernmental cooperation on the collaborative development and implementation of housing-related matters going forward.

Even if no formal agreement is signed, Housing NWT will make it a priority to engage and work with Indigenous governments across the NWT. This collaborative approach is key for providing better service to our communities.

Mr. Speaker, as a new way of doing business, Housing NWT recently collaborated with Indigenous governments on the design of units for seniors and single-occupancy units, both of which have been in high demand. In November 2022, Housing NWT established a Seniors Advisory Committee through discussions with community leadership. The Committee is comprised of seniors, Elders, and those who have direct experience taking care of seniors. Meetings with the committee have provided excellent input on design improvements that can be made by Housing NWT to allow seniors to age-in-place in their communities, in units that better meet their needs. This highly collaborative process has allowed for input every step of the way. I want to thank everyone who shared their insight and experience throughout this process.

Mr. Speaker, through the negotiated contracts policy, Housing NWT has worked directly with Indigenous governments and businesses to construct energy-efficient housing units in communities across the NWT. Through this work, we are seeing more locals getting involved in construction, more businesses developing capacity in the residential sector, and more houses being built for residents.

Housing NWT, along with other GNWT departments, has approached all NWT Indigenous governments to discuss market housing opportunities. Our government conducted research to determine specific occupational needs for each community, including the need for frontline workers such as teachers and nurses, and presented that information to Indigenous governments as an opportunity to build units to support staffing in these communities.

With funding from the federal Urban Native Funding Program targeted at Indigenous clients, Housing NWT was able to provide the North Slave Housing Corporation with \$600,000 for their repair program, supporting 75 units in Yellowknife that house Indigenous clients. This injection of funding enables us to improve the quality of these units while also making them more energy-efficient.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT does not always have to be the lead in providing housing solutions. Over the life of the 19th Legislative Assembly, we have seen a welcome federal investment in direct funding to NWT Indigenous governments for their housing and infrastructure priorities of more than \$400 million. This funding along with over \$200 Million that has been provided to the GNWT will help address the overall housing infrastructure deficit in the NWT, and we are already seeing Indigenous governments putting their funds to use across the housing spectrum, from home repair programs to market housing. Housing NWT will continue to support and coordinate with Indigenous governments as they put this money to use on the ground.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, no single government can address the housing needs of the Northwest Territories and its communities. But by partnering with and supporting others, Housing NWT can remain focused on improving the lives of residents most in need by using new approaches and finding new solutions.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.