

Investments in Northern Housing

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide details on Federal and Territorial investments in Social Housing over the next two years. On May 22, 2009 I, along with my fellow Housing Ministers, the Honourable Jim Kenyon of Yukon and the Honourable Hunter Tootoo of Nunavut, and the Member of Parliament for Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Randy Hoback, attended an announcement and signing ceremony here at the Legislative Assembly. On that date, the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories announced in excess of \$117 million dollars in investments in housing in the Northwest Territories over the next two years. These investments are intended to be an economic stimulus and job creation initiative, as well as an important investment in social housing.

As Members may be aware, the bulk of the Federal investment comes through funding dedicated to Northern Housing. The NWT will receive \$50 million of the \$200 million provided to the three territories.

In addition to the Northern Housing fund, the NWT will receive allocations under four other housing initiatives. The NWT will receive \$520,000 over two years specifically for low income seniors, and a further \$100,000 will be provided for housing solutions for persons with disabilities.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Federal government's extension of housing construction and renovation programs originally scheduled to lapse on March 31, 2009 will provide an additional \$3,680,000 over two years. I am also pleased to inform the house that the NWT will receive a \$4.68 million contribution to complete renovations and energy retrofits on existing public housing. These investments recognize that the unique housing needs of the territories cannot be solved through per-capita funding arrangements.

All dwellings constructed or repaired with Federal funding must be built to a high standard of energy efficiency. The NWT Housing Corporation's new EnerGuide80 housing designs will exceed the minimum standards being asked for by Canada. Our new construction standards, together with the energy audits and retrofits we will complete this year, are an important part of the Housing Corporation's contribution to achieving the 16th Assembly's goal of an environment that will sustain present and future generations.

Mr. Speaker, our government is also making a substantial investment in housing over the next two years. The GNWT will provide in excess of \$55 million in new construction and repairs in order to make substantial improvements in the quality of our housing stock.

Every community in our territory will see investments in housing. We will build units through the Public Housing program, as well as our Housing Choices homeownership programs. The NWT HC has recently introduced improvements to these programs. The income levels used to determine eligibility have increased to include more of our households, and subsidy levels have been increased to better reflect the true cost to operate a home. Our programs are now even more flexible and will help provide

homeownership and repair assistance to households, while helping to reduce the cost of living for our residents.

Mr. Speaker, our investments in housing over the next two years will go a long way in achieving the goals we have set out as the 16th Assembly to improve the lives of our residents now and into the future. Housing is a key contributor to the goals of sustainable, vibrant and safe communities, environmental sustainability, improved health and education rates, as well being a key economic contributor in every community in our territory. Our housing investments, together with the other initiatives of our government, are the right approach for these times of economic challenge.

I would also like to extend thanks to this Assembly for the role that you played in this effort. In May of 2008, this Assembly unanimously passed a motion calling for Federal investments in housing to be extended beyond March 31, 2009. In the months since this motion, members have actively raised the issue of Federal housing funding both in public and during Legislative Assembly proceedings, and have been supportive of our efforts to lobby for renewed investment. It is clear evidence of the successes we can achieve when we speak with a common voice to bring more focus to the issues facing our territory.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.