

Update on NWT HC's 2009-10 Capital Delivery

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide an update on the delivery of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's capital acquisition plan for 2009-10. In May, 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 are aware, this funding has been characterized as "use it or lose it" as all funds must be committed by March 31, 2011 or we risk having them clawed back by Canada. We take this risk very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and I am pleased to inform this house that our successes and progress to date leave me very confident that every dollar announced by both levels of government will be invested in our communities through new housing construction and the renovation and retrofit of existing units.

As of today, nearly 400 housing projects have been completed or are under construction in our communities. This represents 67% of our planned delivery for this construction year. Housing construction and repair activity is ongoing in all our communities. New public housing replacement units have been provided in Yellowknife, Fort Simpson, Hay River, Lutselk'e and Aklavik. New homeownership units have been completed in Wha Ti, Fort Liard, and Fort Smith among other communities, while major modernization and improvements to public housing have been completed in Behchoko, Fort Providence, Wrigley and Tuktoyaktuk.

Every community in our territory will see investments in housing through this construction initiative. We will replace existing units through the Public Housing program, as well as provide homeownership opportunities through our *Housing Choices* programs. The NWT HC is currently accepting applications for its *Housing Choices* programs, and residents are encouraged to contact the Housing Corporation office in their region to make an appointment to apply for assistance.

Dwellings constructed or repaired 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 that are scheduled to be completed 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 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, and is a key economic contributor in every community in our territory. Our housing investments, together with the other initiatives of our government, are the right approaches for these times of economic challenge.

New housing construction and repair can have a significant impact on local economies. According to Statistics Canada, for residential construction activities in the NWT, 3.5 person years of employment are created for every \$1million in activity. Mr. Speaker, with a total residential construction in 2009-10 of \$79 million, we anticipate that creating 279 person years of employment in the NWT.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, while we commend the Federal government for their share of NWT investments made in recent years in Northern housing, it is important to note that all of the federal spending has required the NWT to match dollar for dollar. The housing conditions faced in our communities and in Nunavut and the Yukon demand a longer-term solution. I, along with my colleagues Ministers Tootoo and Kenyon, are lobbying the Federal government to agree to a new approach to Northern Housing. This approach is intended to make capital investments permanent and to include funding for the operation and maintenance of new units. It would also deal with the issue of declining funding for the operation and maintenance of existing units. We are looking forward to the upcoming meeting with the Federal Minister, which will occur sometime before Christmas, to continue to make the case for a new approach to providing housing in the North.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.