

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

SUPPORTING SENIORS TO AGE IN PLACE

June 15, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur President. Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak today about the deplorable state of housing in the Northwest Territories. These conditions are documented in the preliminary results of the latest 2014 survey of housing needs. The preliminary survey results indicate that 32 per cent of NWT housing has problems and 20 per cent of our housing stock is in core need for reasons of suitability, adequacy or affordability.

For our seniors, these hardships can be even worse. The recent long-term care study shows that the supply of senior's housing units and long-term care beds is already far behind demand and will only get worse. There will be a shortfall of 258 long-term care beds in Yellowknife by 2026. The greater problem with these realities is that we want seniors to stay in their homes, aging in place is one of our mandated priorities.

A general Canadian study in 2009 indicated that average out-of-pocket monthly costs for a senior to age in his or her own home was \$928 versus \$3500 for that same senior to live in an institutional setting. More detailed NWT-specific research is needed so we can focus our limited dollars to achieve the greatest returns. I think we heard some of that at noon today.

Is the array of support programs offered by the NWT Housing Corporation adequately funded or oversubscribed and can program adjustments keep more seniors in their homes? What other supports, such as handi-buses and home care programs will extend aging in place? We need to know where we are going with seniors aging in place and with the corresponding needs for seniors' housing, long-term care and chronic care.

Our next housing needs survey will be completed for the year 2019, which should chart progress towards reducing core need. This survey should also begin to collect data on the age of respondents so we can better predict demand for aging in place services as well as institutional demands.

Finally, we also need this information much more promptly. We're waiting in 2016 for the full 2014 housing needs survey results, 18 months after the reporting period ended. We can't wait until 2021 to get the 2019 year results to better plan for housing and aging in place. Masi, Mr. Speaker.