

## ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

### QUESTION 805-18(2): HOUSING ISSUES IN NORTHLANDS TRAILER PARK

June 1, 2017

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Earlier today, I thanked the Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation for meeting with a couple of constituents who have issues around affordability of housing in Northlands Trailer Park. People on fixed incomes are finding it difficult to pay the local improvement charges and condo fees. Can the Minister briefly describe our current housing programs that may provide some assistance to residents living in Northlands? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister Responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have many programs, so it is going to be difficult to make it brief, but I am going to try to speak fast and get through this. First of all, tenants need to know that there is an income threshold, so, if they fall under the income threshold, which is close to \$100,000 depending on how many bedrooms you have, then you would qualify for support.

We also need to ascertain the condition of the home. I do hate to say it, but some of the trailers in Northlands Trailer Park are very, very old. We need to make sure that they are economically viable. Once they do qualify, though, we have a number of supports that can be utilized. We have CARE Major that will provide up to \$100,000, which will provide for roofs and foundations, and we have CARE Minor that will do minor renovations that are needed to the homes, windows, et cetera.

We have preventative maintenance that will go in regularly to look at things, once a year. We have a SAFE program that will deal with things that are emergency. If your oil tank is falling off or your furnace is out, that is an emergency. We have CARE Mobility, which will deal with if you have mobility issues, for anyone with disabilities who needs things put in for accessibility. We do have a number of programs that are available to tenants, to residents, throughout the Northwest Territories, and I would really stress for all people to go on to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation website to get a thorough understanding of the programs we have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I am not trying to give the Minister free advertising here, but this is good. I am sure that the website is going to be improved, for the Housing Corporation, as well. I have commended the Minister in my statement today about the good effort on the housing survey, and she has already started to announce some plans for improvement of programs and services. Can she tell me whether any of these new programs and services will be of assistance to residents in Northlands?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Yes, actually, I can. There are a few programs that actually pertain to the residents in Northlands Trailer Park and all residents, too. We will be having the new seniors' Aging in Place repair program that the Members helped advocate to get additional funding in for. We are going to be looking at a new rent

supplement program for people who can't afford their current costs. We are going to be looking at a fuel tank replacement plan, which might be pertinent to people in Northlands Trailer Park, because we need to get rid of the old fuel tanks as they are an environmental concern. We are trying to be proactive in that.

We are also going to be looking at new training programs that will be accessible to all homeowners within the territories, to talk about basic maintenance and care of their homes, just to better educate people. Finally, but not least important, we are looking at more customer service training that we will be providing to all employees of the housing organization, plus the local housing organizations, to just get better service to people and to provide more appropriate one-on-one support.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you again to the Minister. There are obviously widespread issues with affordability of housing in Northlands and across the NWT, especially for those on fixed incomes. In the year 2014, Health and Social Services released a long-term care framework for elders in our communities, and one of the commitments in there was for Aging in Place "to ensure elders and seniors remain in their homes and home community."

How is the Minister of housing working with the health Minister on programs and services to achieve our goal and assist residents in Northlands and across the Northwest Territories?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation acts very closely with the Department of Health and Social Services in regards to aging in place for our seniors and our elders within the territories. Not only do we consult on them with how to support seniors within their own homes, but we are also working closely together in the design of elders' complexes.

From a housing standpoint, I realize that elders and seniors need to have socialization to do well. From the Health and Social Services standpoint, they recognize that providing services, onsite talks about accessibility is the best service to seniors. We work together, actually, to provide units that actually can accommodate both the needs of health professionals going in and providing support and the socialization that is needed for seniors to keep them mentally and physical well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President and, once again, thank you to the Minister for that response. Next year, I will be a senior citizen, but let's not get too excited. In the longer term, the federal government seems poised to finally get back into housing. The Minister is going to meet with her federal counterpart next week, and I commend her for taking that action. What can we accomplish with the federal government's support to better address the issue of housing affordability for the residents of Northlands and, indeed, all our citizens across the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister Responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the federal support for

housing, there are tonnes of things that we can accomplish, but I would rather focus on the need, in my opinion, to build further the relationship with the federal government and the new ministers within that federal government to make them understand the needs of the Northwest Territories.

To understand the costs, when you talk about affordability, the costs of a house to be built in the southern province is almost half compared to what it is in Yellowknife. Going into Tuktoyaktuk or higher regions, it is even more unaffordable. I think that the biggest thing that I am going to try to do is to educate the federal Ministers. As to the challenges that we have, not only with cost of living but just accessibility, our lack of transportation modes, we don't have the highways, etc., so really educating the federal government's Minister responsible for housing as to the challenges that we have is my main goal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.