

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – MARCH 4, 2009
SPENDING SOCIAL HOUSING MONEY IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Today I would like to talk about an aspect of the public housing rental program that I am concerned about. Like the other Members, I, too, want to see an efficient administration of subsidy programs that provide cost-effective services to clients who needs support for their housing costs. We all know that housing costs can be very expensive in the NWT. We understand the importance of this program for our residents, whether they live in small or large NWT communities.

The area that I am concerned about is public housing when that is supplied by private sector landlords. I know that in Yellowknife and some of the larger communities, it makes good sense to provide a rental subsidy to clients who are living in privately owned and operated housing. This increases the housing options available to our residents.

We all know residents who need some assistance with housing costs only. On other fronts, they are managing well, have a job and are meeting their household expenses. Clients like these and the government can be well-served through a lease with private sector landlords.

However, I'm concerned about the Housing Corporation's program which acquired housing through leases with private sector landlords. Agreements that guarantee rent to these landlords, and pay the landlords to provide

maintenance costs for the units. My understanding is that the rental rates are at a premium. The additional maintenance costs or services are definitely at a premium. These are long-term leases, Mr. Speaker. It is another premium to the landlords or a significant benefit to the landlords at the GNWT's expense.

I think these kinds of services are not a cost-effective way to provide a public housing subsidy. They are not the best use of the limited financial resources that we have as a government.

Mr. Speaker, later today I will be asking the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation questions about this type of public housing rent and subsidy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Potential Questions

Can the Minister tell me approximately how many of the 2300 Public Housing Units have been acquired through a long term lease arrangement with private sector landlords?

Can the Minister tell me if these units are still needed, given the huge investment that has been made and is continuing to be made - to increase the number of public housing units?

Can the Minister tell me when he plans to discontinue the use of these existing rental agreements by not renewing the leases at the earliest opportunity?