



February 28, 2024

ROBERT HAWKINS  
MLA, YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

**Oral Question 49-20(1) Yellowknife Aspen Apartments**

This is in response to your February 09, 2024, Oral Questions regarding Yellowknife Aspen Apartments.

Housing NWT has considered the suggestion of a phased approach to construction and occupancy of Aspen Apartments in Yellowknife. This project was funded through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Rapid Housing Initiative which included a defined budget and schedule for the project. A phased approach could potentially impact both of these project considerations. Doing the work in stages would result in inefficiencies associated with coordinating safety for the contractor and residential tenants in an active construction site and providing adequate notice to tenants to access units to perform work. A vacant building will enable a general contractor to work uninterrupted throughout and around the building. Housing NWT has recent experience administering a building system retrofit in an occupied multi-unit residential building and did experience schedule interruption related to coordinating work around tenant schedules.

At present, Housing NWT is finalizing the design and scope of work for the Aspen project and will post a tender opportunity in summer 2024 with a contract completion date targeting summer 2025 occupancy.

In terms of the idea of having tenants assisting as part of this project, in addition to those concerns raised above related to having tenants occupying a building while construction activities are ongoing, there are a few additional considerations. Though there will be some minor cosmetic work including painting, the majority of the scope of work for Aspen Apartments will focus on modernization of building systems which requires certified tradespersons. General consideration around hiring tenants as casuals may impact existing union agreements for the contractor/Local Housing Organizations employer. If the tenants are unskilled, there may also be health and safety, insurance, and other considerations for contractors bidding on and performing the work.

To ensure local benefit and development opportunities are created through Housing projects, Housing NWT procures work in alignment with GNWT policies and procedures which includes the Business Incentive Policy (BIP). BIP prioritizes local and NWT content which includes project labour. Additionally, Housing NWT contracts require a work assignment for an apprentice for all new construction projects. These two actions together will ensure that projects do include local participation and development opportunities.

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Other development opportunities available through Housing NWT's projects include casual work with Local Housing Organizations and support funding to organizations for community initiatives where skill development and training can be a priority in the work to be done. For example, we have funded skill building carpentry projects (sheds & ramps) through local organizations where they were able to hire local individuals and provide training and oversight for the individuals hired.

In recent years, Housing NWT has made a significant investment in capacity building, particularly for apprentices, and will continue to work both with GNWT partners, Indigenous Governments, and local housing organizations to seek additional opportunities for hiring and building the skills of individuals in the workforce.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lucy Kuptana', is positioned above the printed name.

Lucy Kuptana  
Minister Responsible for  
Housing Northwest Territories

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly  
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs