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Land Development to Address Housing Needs

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the price of residential land is determined by the location, cost of development, and supply and demand. Before you have houses, you have to have land to put them on. In Yellowknife, the cost of land has gone through the roof because of the lack of supply and an ever-increasing demand.

People are paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to live in cramped townhouses with no land just to put a roof over the heads of their families. Mr. Speaker, they are the lucky ones. Others are being forced out of apartments that they can no longer afford because of escalating rents. The Salvation Army shelter is full to overflowing with many in this situation. Furthermore, we are trying to encourage skilled people to come and work in the North, but we can't offer them affordable housing.

With the construction of the pipeline requiring all available labour, the Territories is going to be desperate for qualified trades people. The cost of housing up here and the lack of it is going to affect our ability to attract them. Already we have hundreds of fly-in/fly-out workers. Their income taxes and wages are flying out with them, Mr. Speaker. This situation is really strange, Mr. Speaker. We have 1.17 million square kilometres of land, but one of our main housing problems is we have no land to build on.

In the interest of both private and social housing, Mr. Speaker, in areas where land claims are settled, we need to deal with the backlogs and try to speed up the process of transferring land to fee-simple title. Where land claims are not settled, we need to work with community and aboriginal governments to come up with a better way of agreeing to what lands can be developed. Deadlocks are not serving anyone's interest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.