

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 199-18(2): ALLOCATION OF LOTTERY PROCEEDS

June 9, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, Mahsi. My questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. First of all, can you update the House on the status of the review of lotteries to bring them into compliance with the CRA? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're still doing the process of trying to bring the lotteries into the Department. It was recognized a few years ago that having lotteries distributed by SRC may have been taxable to the point of \$1.4 million. So the SRC to their credit are the ones that brought that forward to our attention, though it's better that these proceeds go to physical activity across the Northwest Territories rather than their existence. We're still in the stages of that right now. We're getting legal opinions and everything and we're trying to ensure that we have that transferred too within the Department so that we can use that \$1.4 million for physical activity Northwest Territories. Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that answer. Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge we've never consulted with the public to determine whether there's a desire to see the funding eligibility opened to the arts as well as to sports. Program review seemed to involve only sports organizations and, of course, they have a vested interest. Is there an opportunity to have a broader conversation on how the proceeds are allocated? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT C. MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, there is always a broader opportunity to have further discussion on this. We feel that the investment that's made by the Government through ECE into the arts through ITI is fairly significant and to the point of, well, \$2 million, I think, through ECE. I'm not exactly sure what the ITI numbers are.

And to say that this money is going directly to sports, it actually goes to the overall physical activity and Healthy Choices activity for people across the Northwest Territories. This program, I think, was \$5 million that we're looking to distribute, and that would go to our four sporting organization partners who deliver a lot of programs in all the remote communities, plus it also goes toward funding all the territorial sport organizations across the Northwest Territories. So that little pot of funding has to go a long way. Unfortunately, we don't have the level of profits as other jurisdictions across the country and if we start spreading those small proceeds even further then hopefully we don't want to water down their effectiveness. So we believe that there's a fairly significant investment into arts and culture across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for his answer. At the beginning I thought that I heard that he would be interested in having a public conversation. What would it take to get that conversation started?

HON. ROBERT C. MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we hear from the public all the time, through Members. Asking me to take this on this road to 33 communities has got to be cost effective first of all, and we know what we're going to hear. We're going to hear-- well, we assume we know what we're going to hear: the arts organization across the Northwest Territories will say that they would like part of the lottery proceeds and all the folks that are responsible for delivering

physical activity in Healthy Choices sport programs will say that we need more money ourselves.

So we feel with the \$2 million plus investment from other Government departments, that's a fairly healthy investment into the arts community. And I told the Member that there's always opportunity to have public consultation, what that consists of we'll have to determine that. And I do have a forum coming up later on this spring or early summer. I've made a commitment to our sporting partners that we were going to have another sport forum once we get further into the lottery proceeds going over to the Department, and that might be a great opportunity for me to get their input as to what the next steps may consist of. So I'll have that conversation with them and we'll see where we go from there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that. Mr. Speaker, I don't expect the sport organizations to say that they would like to give up any of their revenue so I'm not sure that really will achieve the ends that I'm looking for here. The information I have is that lotteries contribute \$4 million a year to sports organizations, and I take the Minister's point that this is physical activity. I don't know how the money invested in sports compares to the money invested in arts, all things being equal for that same age group. I wonder if the Minister could commit to producing that information as a starting point to having this conversation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT C. MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Member is absolutely correct, I don't think the sporting organizations would say we want to water down our investment any further, much like if you asked the arts community if they want to spread that \$2 million plus they get between another 30 different organizations. I don't think they'd be in favour of that as well.

So, I mean, there's opportunities here to get some feedback and I will commit to the Member that I'll spend the next little while exploring these options a little further and then we'll continue to have a dialogue. And I'll talk to the sporting organizations during my forum with them and seek their input, and we've got the input from the Member obviously, and I'll continue to seek more input.

But it has to be balanced, Mr. Speaker. There's a very healthy investment in the arts for such a small jurisdiction and we have a healthy investment into the overall physical activity and Healthy Choices and supporting activity in Northwest Territories, so we have to find a good balance there. But I'll commit to the Member that I'll continue working on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.