

## ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

### QUESTION 368-18(2): CHANGES TO INCOME ASSISTANCE REGULATIONS

October 20, 2016

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Earlier this week, I asked questions about the change in Income Assistance Regulations. You will recall that the government has eliminated the food and clothing allowance for children under 18. The Minister assured us on both Monday and Tuesday that there have been no concerns brought to our office.

Mr. Speaker, a resident contacted me with his concerns about this reduction. The resident forwarded to me written responses signed by the Minister addressing those concerns, which he brought to the attention of the Minister. I'll table these e-mails at the appropriate time. Could the Minister please clarify his statement that he hasn't heard any concerns about the change in Income Assistance Regulations? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will continue going on and saying that we haven't heard any concerns since the implementation of the Canada Child Benefit. Leading up to the Canada Child Benefit implementation here in the Northwest Territories, there were some concerns that were going around on Facebook and social media that were brought to our attention. We assured individuals that nothing was going to change; in fact, money was going to go up after August 1<sup>st</sup>. So, yes, since we have the implementation, we haven't heard any concerns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** To say again, this is an e-mail exchange where the Minister has signed the e-mails and the resident has signed the e-mails, and he expresses his concern about the reduction of food and clothing allowances within the Income Assistance Regulations. Could the Minister please clarify that, in fact, he has heard concerns about the changes that have been made?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Any concerns that were brought to the attention of the office, we clarified the situation. As I mentioned, we've taken out the Canada Child Benefit that was introduced on July 1<sup>st</sup>, so we wouldn't count them in the assessments, meaning that all children and all families, in fact, got the full amount of the Canada Child Benefit and we just clarified anything that came up. Since that, we haven't heard any concerns since then.

**MS. GREEN:** So is the Minister saying, then, that he has heard concerns about the changes in the Income Assistance allowances?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Yes. Prior to implementation, actually our CSO staff got very good training, should that anyone that's on income assistance that was concerned about the changes coming forward, that we are going to provide them the information that they need. If the client that the Member is talking about, and the Member herself or any Members of this House, any of the 19 Members that are concerned about the implementation of our changes to the income assistance we'd be glad to give an update; have them sit down with one of our client service officers. As I said, each situation is unique and different and we'd be willing to sit down and provide that information to clarify the concerns that the Member has.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to table these emails and I will pursue my concerns in greater detail at another time. But my last question in this string is to ask the Minister what his department has done proactively to explain the changes to people who receive income assistance about their allowances. Not about the child benefit, the Canada child benefit, but about the change in the income assistance allowances.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** As I mentioned earlier, all our client service officers got the adequate training; the training that they need should any concerns be brought forth from our income assistance clients. As I mentioned yesterday, all the dollars that were going to the clients, ones with families especially, have actually gone up in every household. So any other further concerns, I'd ask them to go and speak to a client service officer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.