

**JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**Members' Request for Additional Investments**  
**Committee of the Whole—2017-2018 Operating Budget Review**  
**Dept. of Municipal and Community Affairs—June 24, 2016**

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, before we leave this budget, I would just like to review the investments that the Regular Members are looking for in this section. They are small relative to the size of the whole budget, approximately \$2.5 million, but they address key program areas in a grassroots way and I believe will deliver good value for money.

The first is an investment in homecare. As we know, with the aging population, there are increasing demands to keep seniors safe and well in their own homes. That is what most seniors want. An investment in the upstream care for seniors prevents a larger expense downstream. Homecare resources are stretched very thin in the territory. For example, there are more homecare resources in the Beaufort Delta than there are in Yellowknife, where half the population lives. I know the Minister is working on a continuing care plan, but feel that there is a need to invest in homecare resources in this budget.

Secondly, we are looking for a small investment in the anti-poverty fund. We know from last year that it was oversubscribed by a factor of 4:1. One of the reasons it is oversubscribed is because there is very little money available to grassroots organizations to address poverty in their communities and to provide immediate help for people who are experiencing hunger and other issues that relate to poverty. Our ask there was to increase the size of this fund because it is a good value for money in terms of addressing immediate problems.

Finally, we are also looking for an investment in youth mental health and addictions. I know the department is working on a plan that will follow on from the Mind and Spirit framework that was released last year. The framework really emphasizes early intervention and prevention, and the investment that we are looking for in youth mental health is a part of this. If we can help youth regain their mental health, their mental wellness, as young people rather than waiting for them to age, we would be giving them a better opportunity in life as well as making an investment for ourselves, as a government, to treat them while they are young rather than waiting until they need more significant and perhaps more costly treatment.

I just wanted to bring those investments back to the Minister's attention before we leave this budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Would the Minister like to respond?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I appreciate all the comments and suggestions that I have received over the last two days, especially in the areas of homecare, anti-poverty, and youth mental health and addictions. These are areas that are clearly in our mandate, and I would suggest that there is no disagreement with anybody on committee that these are areas that we have to invest in and make

sure that we are doing more and better work moving forward in this Assembly. You know, to repeat myself, it is completely consistent with the mandate that we have accepted as the 19 Members.

Having said that, as we accepted our portfolios and moved forward with the work of government over the last 14 months, I have been pretty clear that we have some timelines that we put in place in order to do the meaningful work necessary to help quantify and express how to enhance areas like homecare and youth mental health. I believe, and I think everybody in this House believes, that we are going to have to make additional investment in this area. I am simply saying that we are not done the work. The timeline was not to have the work done at this point, but to be ready to make some informed decisions for the 2018-19 budget instead of the 2017-18 budget.

I hear the Members. This has certainly, I think, been heard by all the Cabinet Members. I have indicated that, if we make more progress than we hoped or planned -- and I am certainly prepared to push the department to move at a faster rate -- we are certainly willing to explore the possibility of a supplemental, but that would have to be supported by Cabinet, FMB, and the House. At this point, I still feel that it is a little premature to be putting money into these areas without a concrete, well-informed plan. Getting the money and having nothing to spend it on, that we have not done and planned for, might not give us the results we want, whereas allocating the money appropriately based on a plan could give us real positive results moving forward.

So I don't disagree with anything I have heard. I think it is been well articulated. I think the passion is there. I think the Cabinet has it. We just feel, in these particular files, that we just need a bit more time. This budget isn't the one. The budget is the most appropriate place to make these investments moving forward.

Once again, I thank committee, and I look forward to continuing to work on these files to make improvements for residents of the Northwest Territories today, tomorrow, and into the future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.