

**JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**Seniors Benefits Changes and Indexing**  
**Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review**  
**Dept. of Education, Culture and Employment—February 21, 2018**

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my questions are about page 46. The department increased the Senior Citizens Supplementary Benefit for the first time in many years last September. I am wondering if the Minister will consider indexing this benefit so that it retains its value to seniors according to the cost of living.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With that particular item, we usually work with Canada on this one, the Senior Supplementary Benefit, so we cannot commit to that at this moment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister commit to advocating to have this benefit indexed to inflation? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This supplementary benefit here in the NWT was the first time we increased it in a number of years. We are always looking to find ways that we can get extra funding from outside governments and other governments, possibly the federal government, but at this time, we will have have discussions on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am unclear what the barrier is to the Minister advocating for indexing this benefit to inflation. Could he please elaborate on that? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a number of programs that we have for seniors across the Northwest Territories. With our consultations and our discussions with the NWT Seniors Society and the Yellowknife Seniors Society, we have had discussions since the beginning of this government. They were pleased with the increase that they did receive from the Department of ECE. Those were our discussions that we had with them and their comments, and they were happy to have that increase. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this exchange underlines the problem of communication with ECE, particularly with the Minister. I'm now going to ask for a fourth time if he will advocate for indexing this benefit so that the value of it keeps up to inflation. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses, to the question.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate the Member's passion for seniors and supporting seniors aging in place and throughout the Northwest Territories. We can have those discussions with the Government of Canada. It will be a bilateral agreement and discussion, but I cannot say what the Government of Canada will come back with. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that. I guess that is as close as we are going to get. The Senior Home Heating Subsidy is a popular program because it offsets one of the greatest household expenses. Is this program due for changes of any kind; income testing, increased accessibility, or any other changes? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we have reviewed the Senior Home Heating Subsidy. We also had this discussion with NWT Seniors Society and the Yellowknife Seniors Society in terms of enhancements that we will be making to the program. If everything goes well, we will be making those enhancements in the new fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I note that there is no increase in money in the budget for this item. What enhancements is the Minister talking about? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some of them are changing from a fuel allocation to a monetary system that will ensure that seniors receive their full benefit. We are also looking at expanding to seniors who are in rental units and looking at, obviously, the income thresholds, for one, and looking at modifications to how communities are allocated to specific zones;, but as I mentioned, we are still in that review process and hoping to get those enhancements passed through in the new fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister tell us when he is going to brief the Social Development Standing Committee on these changes? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If my memory does serve me correctly, I do believe we sent a letter to standing committee on this one. We can follow up and see when there is time to have that meeting, but I can check with the chair of standing committee. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I happen to be sitting quite close to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development, and I am the vice chair. Neither of us have a recollection of receiving any information on this topic. We would appreciate receiving that information at the Minister's earliest convenience. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will follow up on that one, and if it was not sent, then I will make sure that we do send something to standing committee to give them a briefing.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you. My final question is: if there is going to be money available in additional ways, such as seniors who are in rentals, does that mean that the threshold for income qualification is going to go up? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is the expectation, yes.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** I would appreciate any detail the Minister could give us at this time about how those thresholds are going to change. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do not have that detail in front of me, but I can provide it to standing committee in a presentation sooner than later, I suppose. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sooner is gooder. Those are all my questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Moses, did you want to reply?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Yes. I suppose sooner is gooder. Thank you, Mr. Chair.