

**JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**Changes to Home Renovation and Repair Programs**  
**Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review**  
**NWT Housing Corporation—March 7, 2018**

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, during the business planning process, we had some extensive discussion about the care programs. What I'm looking for now is an indication of where the care program -- oh, I see. It has gone down by \$2 million. What I'm looking for is an indication of why this reduction has been made. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. Martin.

**MR. MARTIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Regarding the utilization of the care program, this is certainly one area that the Housing Corporation is continuing to review along with all the other programs within the corporation through this strategic renewal initiative. The past several years, the Housing Corporation has noted a decline since the 2012-2013 delivery season, when there were about 102 homeowners supported through that program.

Currently in 2016-2017, the most recent audited actuals, obviously as reflected here, there was a total support of \$823,000, so that's only 19 per cent of the total available budget. Based on utilization and the less uptake, this was identified as an area for a reduction or fiscal. Sorry, Mr. Chairman, just a second. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To add to that, as part of the review, there are changes now being implemented in the area of the CARE Major to remove the co-pay requirement. This was identified as one of the limitations to the program, that contributed to less uptake.

The Housing Corporation is expecting, with this adjustment, as well as others as the programs are reviewed, the uptake for the coming year will be a lot more. The \$2 million now established for 2018-2019 will be sufficient going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you. The witness may have, in part, answered my next question, which is why the uptake is so low. Is it the Housing Corporation's understanding that the copay is the only reason, or are there other reasons as well? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** The primary reason, yes, is the copayment. Like I have said many times, people that are making \$20,000 can't afford to pay 10 per cent. With the changes where anyone under \$60,000 doesn't need to have a copayment towards the CARE programs, we are hoping that there will be an increase in uptake within that. Again, this is one that we are watching carefully.

It needs to be noted that the Housing Corporation has gone through a lot of changes and more changes to come. Within that, there may have to be some reallocations of funding to make sure that the programs we are changing are adequately funded.

At this time, they are just beginning, so we are closely monitoring. In previous years, the

CARE Major was not expended at capacity, so it may increase, but based on previous years, it was not used to capacity. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the answer. My concern in this area is that, by taking away the copays, many seniors who might use this program to renovate their homes to age in place may find that there is less money available than there has been in the past.

I recognize that the specific aging in place program is the same at \$500,000, but maybe the Minister could put my mind at ease by telling me whether it is seniors who are the primary users of CARE or whether it is another segment of the population. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is a mixture of people, not necessarily only seniors that were using the CARE Major. It is also important to note that, especially with seniors, where we have the aging in place money, but more than that, we are trying to really work with the senior population. We have gone into communities, and we have talked to seniors' associations. We have been trying to reach out to seniors, and we have focused on them, to talk about our other programs such as the CARE PM, which is preventative maintenance. That is an annual program.

The biggest cost when it comes to CARE Major is that people aren't doing the preventative maintenance. It is a lot easier to fix shingles on a roof if you go in every few years than if you leave it for 25 years and your roof is leaking and falling in. We are really trying to focus on the CARE Preventative Maintenance, with the senior population especially, recognizing that they need additional support, to be more proactive in the supports that we are giving them,

Then, of course, seniors with the aging in place can bundle their programs. If they have access to CARE Minor or if they have access to the SAFE program, they can bundle the seniors' aging in place funding. It is not an "only" program; it is a "plus" program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you for that thorough answer. Anything further, Ms. Green, to programs and district operations?

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate that answer. I am wondering how the message about these program changes is being communicated to seniors. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have met with the Seniors' Society, who are helping us to get this information out. As well, as stated earlier, we recognize that our website needs to be changed, so we are working on that currently. We are also looking at a communications plan on a regular basis so that not only this program but all of the changes need to be out.

I have given direction, and it was followed through, to make sure every local housing

organization, every Aboriginal government, every municipal government, actually had the information on our changes.

Just from the past weekend, one of the Regular Members and myself went to Fort Simpson. I looked on the bulletin board of the Aboriginal government there, and I noticed that our programs weren't there. I am going to make a conscious effort, if I have to provide that information on a more regular basis, I need the Aboriginal and the municipal governments and all of the organizations within communities to help me get that information out.

Communication is the toughest issue. Not everyone listens to the Ledge. In fact, my guess is a lot of people don't listen to what is happening in the House. We are working on a communication plan to get this information out. There is no sense doing a program renewal if we don't get it out. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Agreed, there is no point if people don't know about it. I am not sure the website is the most effective way to reach the seniors. The Seniors' Society is probably a better choice.

Just finally, in this area, and I recognize this might not be the right area, but anyway, I will ask the question. The waiting list for affordable seniors' housing in Yellowknife is six years long at the Avens Court, and I am wondering if the Minister can tell us about her new initiative to create more independent housing for seniors in Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not sure what page it is, but it is in our capital plan. We are actually looking at building a seniors' complex within the community of Yellowknife. We are targeting for 22 units. I know it is small, but it is the most progress thing we have done in many, many years.

Of course, within that, we are doing the full review of a study of what seniors' needs are throughout the territory so that we can actually be more strategic in putting seniors' units up. They are our knowledge; they are our history. It is important that we respect them and we provide accommodations as best as possible. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Closing comments, Ms. Green?

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. While 22 units does sound modest, I think there are around about 30 units in Avens Court; so this would almost double the amount of housing. I am going to call this a really good start. We obviously need more in years to come, but I appreciate the answers that I have received, and I have nothing further. Thank you.