

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

**QUESTION 217-18(3):  
DISCLOSURE OF INCOME INFORMATION TO NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
HOUSING CORPORATION**

**March 7, 2018**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. My statement outlined the recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner in the matter of the privacy of income information complaint on behalf of public housing tenants. The ruling called on the Housing Corporation and its LHOs to amend its practices to provide for an alternative to giving the information directly to the CRA. First of all, can the Minister tell us whether she has accepted the findings of the Information and Privacy Commissioner? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have implemented the recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner. The recommendation to look at CRA assessments was actually based on good intent, as the Member has stated. I think it is actually a good practice. It took me a little while to get my head around it, as well, when I first took over the position.

Previous to that, people were presenting their incomes to the local housing organizations. That leads to more chances of private information on income actually getting leaked into the public, with staff turnover, et cetera. The Privacy Commissioner found that it was actually better for ensuring that people's private information was less accessible, but she did have a recommendation that people be provided alternatives to providing that information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** I appreciate the Minister's answer. Can the Minister tell us what those alternatives look like? What kinds of things are accepted as an alternative to the linkage to the CRA?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I want to step back for a minute and talk about the process for accessing the information from the Canada Revenue Agency. It is really important to note that this is actually the most private way that people can share their income information. It is important to get income information, as these are tenants who are usually in public housing.

Only 10 people within the corporation have access to this information, including myself. I don't even have access as the Minister. It is really confidential. Although, some people, like I say, weren't comfortable with us doing that, so we provide the alternative that people can bring in their tax assessments on an annual basis. That tax assessment, which does provide their information, will also be utilized for the annual assessing of people's information. Some people, again, are not comfortable with it, only a handful. Not very many have complained about it. In those extreme cases, we are allowing them to still bring in their monthly paperwork to the local housing organization. Again, that has

more risk of people's private information being leaked.

**MS. GREEN:** What I understand is the alternative to the electronic access to the CRA is to present the paper copy of the tax filing to the local housing authority and they will calculate the rent on that basis. That is my understanding. If the Minister could confirm that and also say that this is an option that could be followed at any LHO in the NWT?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Absolutely. The Member is correct. People can bring their paper copy of their tax assessment into any local housing organization within the Northwest Territories. That will be used to verify their annual income.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, finally, I know that there is a very high rate of tax filing in the NWT, yet not everybody files a tax return. In the case where a tenant hasn't filed a tax return or needs help filing a tax return, how can the LHO respond to them? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Again, it is really important that we verify annual income to confirm that people are paying appropriate rent. It is not fair if somebody is not filing their taxes and paying a minimum charge and the neighbour who is paying their taxes is actually paying more. We need to verify that. These are usually public housing units. Market rent, of course, is different. They are paying the market rent.

Within the public housing, we do ask them to file their taxes. There are a number of supports within communities that will help them with that. We stress to them that it is important. A last resort would be to bring in, again, their monthly income. Again, that has to be verified, and it is the most insecure way of providing their income. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.