

**KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE**

**Federal Child Tax Benefit**

**Committee of the Whole—2016-2017 Operating Budget Review**

**Dept. of Education, Culture and Employment —June 7, 2016**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. And I know that I've asked the Minister some questions about indexing of income assistance over the last week, and there was some further discussion of that to increase that appropriately even here in the House today. I understand that there has to be changes brought in, legislative changes, in terms of the NWT Child Benefit, the Canada Child Benefit, but when I look at our schedule, it looks like that legislation's probably not going to get into the House until October or November, and presumably at the end of that session we might be the Commissioner to sign off on it. So would the changes actually be made retroactive to April 1st or for the tax year? I'm just trying to understand the schedule here and when people could expect to see changes to the benefits that they receive. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Minister?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** For the income assistance changes, it will be August 1<sup>st</sup>, as mentioned in the House. We just have to get some minor changes done to the regulations for the child benefit, as the Member said, we are going to have to make some legislative changes to reflect that and that could be a little bit longer.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the answer from the Minister. So when those legislative changes come through, can they be made retroactive to August 1<sup>st</sup> or do they only come into effect on the signing of the legislation by the Commissioner? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Minister?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Yes, in terms of retroactive pay, we would have to talk to the Federal Government in that area. In terms of the other one, we just have to wait until the legislative proposal actually gets approved.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess I'm a little confused now if I wasn't before. So there's the Canada Child Benefit, the NWT Child Benefit. Do we have to change our Income Tax Act to ensure that people can take full advantage of both of those benefits and when would those changes actually legally come into effect? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Minister?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Yeah, and I appreciate the Member bringing up questions in terms of retroactive pay and whether the GNWT can focus that on their own in terms of funding as questions were in the House earlier today, and last time we did the income assistance increase was April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. The increase was about 20 per cent. Currently, our government doesn't have any policy to reflect changes in income assistance. We review on a case by case basis. To get to a couple of the other details, I will ask my deputy minister to get into a bit more details of the program and where we can see some real

changes. As I mentioned in the House, these are going to be some great changes for low to moderate income families moving forward, and the sooner we can get on that and bring it into force the better it'll be for our residents. I'll ask my deputy minister to give a little bit more detail. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Recognizing Deputy Minister Stewart.

**MR. STEWART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in terms of timing, the changes for income assistance that do not include the Canada Child Benefit and custody payments as part of the calculation. That'll take place on August 1<sup>st</sup> for the calculation for the August month. My understanding is that the federal changes will start to roll out in July, so it'll time well with those changes. The changes to the NWT Child Benefit will require the legislative changes and the likely timing is the fall for that. Once we have those changes in place, then we have to work with the Federal Government on implementing those, although we're doing some of that already, and then once that change takes place then those payments will start to roll out. The effective date of the change to the NWT Child Benefit of course would have to be when the legislation changes.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Stewart. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the deputy minister for that response. I would encourage the department then to move forward then as quickly as they can so we can help our folks better on income assistance. Thanks, Mr. Chair.