

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE

Maintaining GNWT Funding to Housing

Committee of the Whole—2016-2017 Operating Budget Review

NWT Housing Corporation—June 16, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm looking at the line, minor repairs, under rental housing programs. The figures here jump around quite a bit: 2014-15 it was over \$7.4million, next year is \$1.7million in 2015-16, and then in 2016-17 is \$2.2 million. So why are these figures jumping all over the place? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Jim Martin will address that answer.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Mr. Martin.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the difference here from 2014-15 actuals to the current mains is primarily explained by a required accounting adjustment at the end of the year. All the same capital projects that we started out with for the year were delivered. However, at the end of the year, we go through an accounting process to ensure that we have them properly classified between major capital and minor capital. And minor capital is considered O and M, and that's why we have a higher number in this case for 2014-15, again, just simply those are the year-end accounting adjustments. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks for the explanation. Not that I don't want to spend money on minor repair, but why is it the difference between last year, in 2015-16, and 2016-17? We just haven't accrued the year end stuff through the accounting or what's happening there? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. We'll send it back to Mr. Martin.

MR. MARTIN: Thank, Mr. Chairman. The difference between the 2015-16 budget is explained primarily by the new federal funding, so that's been added in, which is essentially the minor, O and M, related items such as fuel tanks and demolition. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. And I appreciate the explanation. So how much of that \$2.2 million is actual federal funding? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Martin.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is \$1.5 million of new federal funding that's been added into the 2016 Main Estimates figure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I was afraid I was going to hear this, we're all aware that the federal government's finally getting back into affordable housing, and that's a good thing and we want them there, but I don't want that to be used as an excuse for us not to spend money on housing. So is this going to be a continuing trend where if we acquire more federal dollars we're going to start spending less ourselves on housing? Is that where we're going? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, no, we are still committed to supporting housing within the NWT. This year we have \$84 million committed from the Northwest Territories Government and last year it was actually around the same. So even with the \$35 million that we received from the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories has still put in the same financial figure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that commitment from the Minister, and it's something that I'll certainly be watching very carefully because I'm sure we all want to work towards improving our housing and getting it out of core need. And as new federal dollars come in, we shouldn't be withdrawing our funding as well or during that period as well. Thanks, Mr. Chair. It's more of a comment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Would the Minister like to respond?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate the Member's comments. I think that the whole of the GNWT is committed, like I say, to housing and recognize the need, and is committed to trying to address the needs of the residents of the NWT as best as possible. Thank you, Mr. Chair....

... **MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. I think, again, the concern is that we have new federal dollars starting to finally come in. That should not be a reason or -- pardon me -- an excuse for us to withdraw money out of housing. I will be watching the public accounts to see if that is indeed the case. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr Chair.