

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE

RCMP Staff Housing

Committee of the Whole—2016-2017 Operating Budget Review

NWT Housing Corporation—June 16, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I know that we've started to talk a little bit about RCMP housing. I wanted to ask, so somewhere in the budget for this year, though, there must be some resources devoted to actually building or managing the construction of RCMP housing in 2016-17. Would that be right? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, on page 356, you'll see the capital amount of \$3.4 million, and that is to purchase land, and it's also for one six-unit in Fort Smith, \$37.5 million on page 356. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So we don't actually have any O and M resources devoted to the construction or management of that work? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll let Mr. Anderson answer that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the corporation has project officers in our regional centers. They manage the inspection services on all of our capital projects in all of the communities. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So these project officers, they would be the ones that would be overseeing this work, so we would be expending part of our O and M resources to manage this RCMP housing construction and so on? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Anderson will take that, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have a program that we're putting out about just on the capital side of about \$37 million, so our project officers are in the communities already doing projects on the social housing side, so this would be one extra project that they would be providing that support to as well. I guess the other point I would make is that our project officers are primarily in the regional centers, and so they're in the community too to support that process. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So these project officers are managing all of this work. I'm just trying to get a sense of what portion of that work would be this RCMP work, and I'm not asking for an exact figure. Is it one per cent? Five per cent? 50 per cent? Just trying to get an understanding of what level of work is involved for those folks in managing this particular project. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're projecting that the scope of work for the project managers will be very small. It would just be during the construction phase. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Why I'm asking this reason or these questions is I'm concerned that, look, I think we all want to keep RCMP in the communities and we want to look after them and treat them well and so on, but we're devoting our scarce O and M funds, maybe even some capital funds, to building housing that perhaps the RCMP should be managing and doing themselves.

Is this taking away from our ability to provide housing for our own people in our own communities? That's the question I guess I have for the Minister. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to just explain to the Members that the NWT Housing Corporation has been in market housing for quite a number of time. We've been providing market housing to the smaller communities because they don't have the market community in their communities. So we've been providing housing for professionals such as social workers, nurses, etcetera, teachers, for decades. It's not like we're starting something new. This is something that we've done for a long time and we continue to do. In fact, we have 400 units within the NWT that we provide that service for currently, and again, the revenue that we make from these units will help us to address the declining CMHC funding that we know will be coming within the next 2036--28? 38? 38. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the answer from the Minister. It's helpful, but the fact is that we've got a limited pool of money to work with for housing for our own people. Now that has to be spread a little bit thinner because we're going to be putting in housing and managing that for the RCMP. I don't know why we're all of a sudden now providing housing for the RCMP, but I guess that was a decision from another Minister, but we've got a limited pool of money to work with. Is this taking away from our capacity to provide housing for our own residents? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, this will not take away our ability to provide housing for our residents. We've been doing market housing for about 15 years. We have a huge success rate within the communities. The community has asked us to keep it. Not only do they appreciate it, they require it in order to maintain services such as teachers, social workers, nurses, and now RCMP within our communities, they rely on the NWT Housing Corporation to provide those units. The cost of the RCMP housing actually will be--the operating and maintenance will be charged back to them and they will be paying market rent, so it is a revenue-based program that we're looking at. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Would the Minister then commit to providing information to the House about how much we're spending to build these homes, operate them, and what sort of revenues we're getting back? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have done that to the Committee. If the Committee would like another briefing on that, we are willing to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That's not what I asked. I asked if the information could be provided to the House. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, if the Members would like us to provide it in the House, then we can do that, although I would like to say that I was hoping that the Committee was a way of disseminating information to the Members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the commitment from the Minister to publically table that information in the future.