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**Tobacco Cessation**  
**Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review**  
**Dept. of Health and Social Services—February 28, 2018**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I want to move on to tobacco cessation. I know this is the general area to talk about it. One of the most effective ways to reduce tobacco use is to increase the cost of the product. What kind of conversations has the Minister had with his colleague the Minister of Finance in terms of increasing tobacco cost, tobacco taxes to help reduce consumption and then the need for cessation and health promotion programs and so on? I know we have had one small increase in the time that I have been here as an MLA. Is that part of an overall program or plan for reducing tobacco use, and is this something that the Minister of Health is discussing with the Minister of Finance? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in my opinion and I think the opinion of many people, what we do is a multi-pronged approach on tobacco cessation. It is not just a matter of raising taxes. Raising taxes might help, but raising taxes in conjunction with some of the exercises and programs we are putting in place to increase dialogue and encourage youth to stay off will probably give us better results. It is more expensive, and people understand. We hope to see better results.

I have many times suggested to the Minister of Finance that we need to be number one in tobacco taxes in Canada. I will continue to do that. As other jurisdictions jump in front of us, I will once again encourage the Minister to help us become number one in tobacco taxes. I know last year, we were number two. I don't know where we sit today. I will have a conversation with the Minister of Finance immediately after this and strongly encourage him to make us number one. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. That is helpful. I look forward to hearing more information about it from both Ministers. I know there has been some discussion about how we can get the message out better about the impacts of tobacco, particularly to young people and people in small communities where the rates are higher. What is the department looking at in terms of tailoring its communications efforts and overall programming to try to reduce tobacco use amongst youth and in small communities? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Time has expired, but I will allow the Minister to respond.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there are a number of things that obviously need to be done here. I have had a conversation with a large number of leaders in communities across the Northwest Territories and had the conversation about how we get the message out in your community, recognizing that the vehicle in one community might not be the same as the vehicle in the other

community. I have had some good feedback. In other areas, I haven't heard too much.

We are trying to reach out. I have directed the authority, through the deputy minister and the CEO, to reach out to the communities to figure out how to communicate information that is important to them in a way that will resonate in their communities, recognizing it may be a different mechanism by community. That is not just about smoking cessation. That is about messaging about when are health providers going to be in your community, who is coming in, when are they coming in, what programs or resources are new to help make sure that our people are informed. That will certainly include work on smoking cessation.

At the same time, the communities have community wellness plans. Many of them have talked about the types of things they want to address. Some communities have chosen smoking cessation as one of the things they wish to address. Frankly, in my opinion, communities are probably some of the best people to identify how information could work. We will give them all the technical data they want. Some have customized it appropriately.

The other thing we are trying to do is: we are working with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to renew the school health curriculum. I talked about that earlier today. I think it is very exciting. We have our Aboriginal Health and Community Wellness division. I think it is honestly the first time that Health and Social Services has actually been actively engaged in curriculum development, so it is very exciting.

In that, they are talking about current and relevant resources that could be available to schools to help encourage children to not take up smoking as a habit. Like I said, I asked the department to do some exploration around "Butthead" and see if maybe there is an opportunity to revitalize or reintroduce it, "Don't Be a Butthead," if it is something the public tells us they want. Thank you, Mr. Chair.