

**MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE**  
**CLAW BACK OF FEDERAL GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT**

**November 23, 2021**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Many Members have seen the recent national media coverage on the claw back of federal Guaranteed Income Supplement, or GIS, payments from seniors who received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or CERB, during the pandemic.

The federal government was encouraging everyone to take CERB payments without a thought to how that might affect future income from our social safety net.

Only later, much later, are seniors now finding out that CERB payments are being counted as income against GIS and other social assistance, which are now being reduced. As many as 90,000 seniors are affected nationally.

Here in the Northwest Territories, there are further consequences with the federal claw backs. With the reduction in federal GIS benefits comes a corresponding cut in the NWT Seniors Supplement.

All of this because CERB emergency payments are now being declared and counted as additional income. And as we learned earlier in the year, people in the Northwest Territories public housing, including seniors, are having their rents increased if they received CERB payments.

So what can this government do to provide some clarity and help for seniors?

First, we should find a way to de-link the calculation of the NWT Seniors Supplement for those who did not receive GIS because they took a CERB payment.

Ideally, we need to recognize that CERB was an emergency program during a global pandemic that might happen once a century and not penalize the poorest seniors by counting this assistance as some sort of unearned income.

I implore this government to work with other provincial and territorial governments to stop this unjust treatment of seniors.

I'll have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on what this government is doing to stop these unfair claw backs of social assistance to NWT seniors.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.