



May 24, 2020

MR. RONALD BONNETROUGE
MLA, DEH CHO

Oral Question 34-19(2) Income Security Client Banking Issues

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on February 07, 2020 regarding Client Services Officers turning away client(s) that do not have bank statements on hand when applying for the Income Assistance (IA) program.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is responsible for the IA program that provides financial assistance to residents that do not have the financial resources to meet their basic and enhanced needs. In determining eligibility, Client Services Officers must consider all financial resources an applicant and their spouse receive during the month (money, net income, assets, gifts of money, gifts other than money, etc.). In doing so, requesting bank statements is standard procedure.

ECE staff encourage applicants that do not have a bank account to consider opening one so that payments can be deposited directly. However, if an applicant does not have or want to open a bank account, they are not refused benefits.

I assure you that applicants who do not have access to a computer, internet, printer or fax machine can use office equipment that is available and they can also request assistance from the Client Services Officer. If an applicant is not able to provide a copy of their bank statement, they can request that ECE obtain this information directly from their bank. Unfortunately, since this is a third party request the information is not provided in a timely manner and varies with each bank. All information must be verified so any delay to receiving the client's information for an application will result in a delay to receiving benefits. To avoid delays applicants are encouraged to provide their bank statements.

The Department invests in providing the training and resources needed for Client Services Officers and Regional Managers to deliver programming in regional centers and communities.

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Client Services Officers across the territory are required to complete Statutory Training prior to delivering the IA and Senior Home Heating Subsidy programs. Statutory Training includes a review of all Legislation, Regulations, Policies, Procedures and Code of Ethics for Income Security Employees. ECE has a consistent approach to training to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and consistently while ensuring programs are compliant.

I would like to assure you that ECE is committed to continuously reviewing programming to ensure that it is relevant, current and meeting the needs of residents of the Northwest Territories.

Thank you for your questions and interest in this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Simpson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

R.J. Simpson
Minister, Education, Culture
and Employment

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Deputy Minister, Education, Culture and Employment
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs