



May 24, 2020

LESA SEMMLER
MLA, INUVIK TWIN LAKES

Oral Question 97-19(2) Income Assistance

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on February 26, 2020 regarding the support provided to individuals that are on the low-cost housing waitlist.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is responsible for the Income Assistance (IA) Program that provides financial assistance to residents that do not have the financial resources to meet their basic and enhanced needs. These needs include shelter, food, utilities, clothing, as well as allowances for persons with permanent disabilities or aged.

In order for an IA program applicant to qualify for a rental benefit, their name must be on the low-cost housing wait list. However, ECE recognizes that not all applicants are able to have their name placed on the waitlist for a variety of reasons. In those situations, the Director can be contacted to determine rental assistance on a case-by-case basis.

Individuals who are on the low-cost housing waitlist and have found suitable housing will qualify for a rental benefit to be included in their monthly needs assessment. When determining the amount of rent that an applicant qualifies for, ECE refers to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS), which is the legal standard for suitable housing with respect to number of occupants, sharing of rooms, etc.; and to the Market Rent Report (MRR) created by the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation which measures the prices for homes of different sizes across the country. This ensures that our applicants are in housing that is suitable for their unique needs. We understand that there is a housing shortage in some of our communities and that proper housing is not always easily accessible to our applicants. I would like to ensure you that ECE takes this into consideration when determining an applicant's rental benefit.

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Northwest Territories (NWT) Post-secondary students who are receiving Student Financial Assistance (SFA) benefits and not able to meet their basic need are encouraged to apply for the IA program in order to determine eligibility. Students can receive a top-up from the IA program, in addition to the benefits they receive through SFA.

ECE will consider all suggestions on how to ensure that the IA program and the NWT Housing Corporation (NWT HC) programs are mutually benefiting the NWT's most vulnerable residents. I am committed to exploring this issue with the Minister Responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

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. Minister Responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Deputy Minister, Education, Culture and Employment
President, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs