

SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM –2

Thank you Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Speaker, on Friday this legislature passed a motion requesting that Cabinet stop the implementation of the proposed Supplementary Health Benefits Program. All 11 members on this side of the house, the majority of this assembly, supported the motion. The 7 members of Cabinet abstained.

During the debates on the motion the Minister of Health and Social Services said, according to the unedited Hansard of Friday, February 6, 2007, "I believe the intent of the policy is reasonable" She further stated that "those who can afford to should contribute to the cost of benefits that supplement their health care".

Mr. Speaker, I believe that these comments go to the heart of the problem that we're experiencing with the proposed Supplemental Health Benefits. The Minister is committed to means testing for supplemental health benefits regardless of any sound evidence that suggests that it's the right way to do things. There's a remote chance that it may be. However without financial analysis or research to demonstrate or back up that that it is the right way to go, it's premature to commit so rigidly to that model of delivery. It's short sighted and does not allow for the development of a reasonable policy.

The Minister and Cabinet need to listen to what the majority of the members and the public have said. They need to immediately cease the implementation of this policy and rethink their devotion to means testing. They need to do the research and financial

analysis with an open mind and no preconceived attitudes that their way is the best and only way to do things.

I strongly believe that a full-cost analysis will demonstrate that means testing of supplementary health benefits will do more harm than good and will ultimately cost us all far more than it saves.

The motion on Friday was clear. The majority has spoken. Go back to the drawing board on the changes to Supplemental Health Benefits with no pre-conceived notions. Develop a program that is in the best interest of all Northerners. Do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions on this topic for the Minister Responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time.