

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

DISABILITIES ACTION PLAN

March 3, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to propose that we in this House work together to further the NWT Disabilities Council's vision that all individuals have the opportunity and access to achieve their full potential. We can do that by creating a new five-year plan for them. The previous five-year action plan for persons with disabilities comprised 34 main action items under five pillars of education, employment, disability supports, income, and housing. The action plan was endorsed when it was completed in 2008 and apparently, quite promptly forgotten. Fast-forward to 2015 when the NWT Disabilities Council took stock of the action plan. The council met with senior managers of all departments accountable for actions in the 2008 plan. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, council staff discovered that senior managers didn't even know a plan existed. The council also gathered information by surveying 321 people who live with a disability, care for someone with a disability, or provide a service. The council's item-by-item review revealed that many of the priorities identified in the 2008 plan remain to be addressed.

The 2015 review includes these recommendations:

1. Figure out how many people are living with a disability in the NWT and what their needs are;
2. Address the accessibility of both public and private buildings to address functional accessibility and social inclusion for the disabled;
3. Re-assess income support for people with disabilities;
4. Address affordable and accessible housing concerns; and
5. Continue work on the priorities from the 2008 plan.

I am told that recently that council briefed our Ministers of Education, Culture, and Employment (ECE) and Housing about the contents of the review. So where should we go from here? The council says the direction should be forward. The recent GNWT-funded evaluation of the plan's status, with full input from responsible departmental participants, is done. We don't need an internal review to mirror that work and hold back progress. What we need, what the council wants, is to get all the stakeholders to the table with authority to update and recommend changes for a new five-year plan. That new plan should have costed deliverables, resources for implementation with annual evaluations built in.

At the last election nine of the Members here in this House, including four Cabinet ministers, answered yes when they were asked if they would support the creation of a new strategic plan for improving disabled persons' situations and services. I'll have questions for the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities later. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.