

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 116-18(2): DISABILITIES ACTION PLAN

March 3, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, and they follow from my Member's statement. First of all, I'd like to hear a renewal of commitment from the Minister. The motion of the 17th Assembly called for the government to propose an approach for taking a new action plan forward. This motion is not binding on the government, obviously; it happened in the last Assembly. However, will this Minister honour this motion in the spirit of progress and continuity, and propose an approach by the end of June? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, certainly I'm not going to talk to a motion that was in the previous government, but I can say that this government is actually committed to moving forward with an action plan for persons with disabilities, building upon the work that's been already done, but also working with our partners who are doing incredible work within the communities to help and address the issues of persons with disabilities. This is consistent with our mandate, and we'll have a plan in place and be able to give some details of how that plan is going to roll out and when the action plan will be completed, certainly by the end of June. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: The Minister is one of nine MLAs, including four ministers, who said yes to the Council's election question, "Will you commit to the development of a new strategic plan?" so half this House is on record promising support for a new plan. As the responsible minister, will you commit to producing a new strategic plan in the life of this Assembly?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'll read Hansard tomorrow but I think I just made that commitment in my previous answer. This is something that is consistent with our mandate. It's something consistent with what we actually said in the life of the last government, even though we didn't support the motion for technical reasons, and it is something that we're going to do in this Assembly.

MS. GREEN: My question now is about the process. The NWT Disabilities Council did an evaluation of the 2008 plan, but they do not want to go back and fix that plan, they want to start with a new plan. They're eager to come to the table with you and other members of the disability service and advocacy community. Will you commit to a process for developing this new plan that will be broad-based and include stakeholder groups who will work with responsible departments and work forward from today, rather than backward from 2008?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It's like the Member is reading my comments that I'm going to make later today in the response to the motion. Absolutely. This is going to require working among the departments to make sure that we're working as a system rather than silos. But more importantly, to address the needs of persons with disabilities and ensuring that we're providing the best services at the right time, we need to engage the stakeholders who are often champions and individuals who are at the front line working with persons with disabilities. As such, we are absolutely going to work with the council, as well as other organizations who are providing those services. We need to do this together, we need to be collaborative, and we need to put in a plan that highlights and addresses the issues moving forward.