

## ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

### QUESTION 448-18(2): IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE RESPONSES TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

November 2, 2016

**MS. GREEN:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. One of the issues revealed in the YWCA Study of Improving Responses to Sexual Assault is addressing confusion, especially in small communities, about where to find the kit used to collect evidence of an assault. What steps is the Minister going to take to ensure nursing station staff know where to find and how to use rape kits? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, I'm under the impression that we actually have rape kits in the vast majority of our health facilities in the Northwest Territories, but I can't actually say a hundred per cent that we have one in every health authority or health centre. So the first step, obviously, is I will confirm whether or not we have them in the communities and figure out how to get them into the communities so that they're there, and then I'll work with the Member and committee to figure out how best to get that information out to residents across the Northwest Territories, including staff.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that. So am I to understand that in addition to identifying whether there are rape kits in every place, that the Minister will also commit to ensuring each nursing station staff knows how to use them?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, yes, I just need to confirm whether there's one in every health centre across the Northwest Territories; I can't remember off the top of my head if that is the case. I'll also work with the authority to make sure that appropriate training is available. We do have challenges. We do have a significant amount of turnover, and sometimes we have individuals who are only in for a couple of days, but I will work with the authority to make sure that there's reasonable training to ensure that most of our nurses can be trained in a timely and reasonable way.

**MS. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, the report from the YWCA also references development of a new policy and guidelines for health providers on how to support clients who report sexual assault. I wonder if the Minister can tell us whether that work is now complete.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, the report that the Member is referring to, Hush Hush No More, I believe that's the one the Member is referring to, came out in June and it was shared with MLAs, but the YWCA never directly sent it to myself as a Minister asking us to take particular action. I have asked and directed that this report be put on the next committee of Cabinet, the next Safety and Wellness Committee of Cabinet, so we could discuss it as a whole government.

If you look at the report and look at the recommendations, many of the recommendations are cross-departmental and government as a whole, but not just government. I mean, this report talks clearly about residents of the Northwest Territories, NGOs, many other groups, getting out and talking about sexual assault. There is a significant stigma. There's people not talking about it and then people, in fact, encouraging people not to talk about it. We work with our partners

across government, across the Northwest Territories to encourage people to talk about it. I applaud the Member for obviously raising it in this House and bringing the report to the floor, and I think we all must work together to break the stigma and get the information out there.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Masi, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that. One of the things I spoke about in my statement was consent and the issue of raising public awareness around consent would be a multi-departmental issue. So you referenced the Cabinet Committee on Safety and Wellness; is this the kind of work that they might do? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, one of the roles of the committees of Cabinet is help to break down barriers between different departments and get departments working together on cross-purposes. This is certainly an area that I think would fit nicely within the Safety and Wellness Committee of Cabinet, and, as I said, I've referred it to that committee for discussion to see what we're currently doing, what we can do within existing finances, existing resources, and what partnerships we need to work on in order to get that information out.