

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

REFLECTIONS AFTER A YEAR

November 3, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm going to reflect on this year since I was elected to represent the residents of Yellowknife Centre and, indeed, the whole Northwest Territories. I want to talk about yesterday as both the best of times as an MLA and among the worst.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by referencing the mandate of the 18th Assembly. It is both our statement of principles and our work plan for our time here. It requires us to take action on the crisis of family and community violence. It also directs us to make strategic investments in transportation infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, the 26 priorities were not assigned a weight and it's clear that this government values some more than others. Mr. Speaker, 10 of us on this side of the House spoke passionately about the A New Day Program yesterday, a one-of-a-kind program in the NWT that provides healing for men who use violence and additional safety for women and children. We requested an additional year of funding at a cost of \$325,000, while an evaluation is completed.

Upstairs, just a few minutes later, Regular MLAs heard the government's pitch on building a 97-kilometre road to Whati. The road is in environmental assessment and there's work going on to come up with money for construction. The last public figure on the cost of this road is \$150 million. Mr. Speaker, about the same number of people live in Whati as the number who have used the New Day Program, that's roughly 350 people. Yesterday we learned the government has decided to interpret the mandate to make the road to Whati a high-priced priority while remaining non-committal about funding a systemic solution to family violence, specifically the New Day Program. Perhaps what galls me above all is that no matter how many times we, as Regular Members, tell the executive to back off on its \$150 million reductions target, our direction is ignored and generating cash for roads relentlessly wins out.

Mr. Speaker, I am never going to be happy when the government decides to invest in roads rather than people. The cost benefit study indicates some economic benefits if a mine ever goes ahead, almost no economic worth if it doesn't. Investment in the New Day Program may change not only the life of a single man but the life of his family scarred by the trauma of colonization and residential schools.

I have spent much of this year advocating for people who live on the margins of our society: women and children, those who don't have adequate housing and those who live on low-income, those who've experienced violence and those with disabilities. It's a sometimes exhilarating and sometimes frustrating experience to pursue these issues in this House, but I'm committed to these people and this work with even greater passion than when I was elected a year ago. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.