

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

DISABILITIES ACTION PLAN

November 4, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, in March of this year I raised the issue of the dormant NWT Disabilities Action Plan, completed in 2008 but apparently forgotten until the NWT Disabilities Council resurrected it in 2015 with questions about its implementation and status. Their evaluation contained a number of recommendations, all based on the principle that we have all the information we need on current supports, or the lack thereof, and that we now need to move on to action.

I attempted to move this process forward through a motion, which was adopted by this house and supported by my colleagues, and supported by the Cabinet, as well. It called on the government to work with the NWT Disabilities Council and other stakeholders to develop a new action plan, including measurable outcomes and ongoing evaluation.

In June, the government replied to that motion. Government said it would first of all complete an updated inventory of the disabilities supports in place. The work would identify gaps in those services and assess the barriers to providing services in the right combinations. Key to the effort would be a collaborative process, including both service users' and service providers' input.

I understand that a working group including government and stakeholder representation has been created and they are hard at work. Detailed service and gap information is being assembled, with government members showing good effort to collaborate across departmental lines. Next week, departments and stakeholders will gather again to review that disability program review and set plans for completing a new action plan that relies heavily on accountabilities and evaluation. In the reply to our motion, the government has promised that plan will be in place by the end of this fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

(Unanimous consent was refused by Herb Nakamayak, MLA Nunakput. Upon my second request to conclude my statement, unanimous consent was granted.)

Representatives of the NGO sector are reporting positively and hopefully on the efforts with the disability action plan, but the test here will be whether this new plan suffers the same fate as the last. Clear deliverables, regular evaluation and reporting, and, above all, adequate resourcing will be essential for making progress on helping persons with disabilities make the most of their potential. We'd like to see an end to the resolution of disability access cases through human rights complaints and settlements, as reported twice in recent media. It's time to get out in front of complaints with proactive delivery of services. I'll have questions for the Minister about the road ahead. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.