

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 467-18(2): DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW DISABILITIES ACTION PLAN

November 3, 2016

MS GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As I said in my Member's statement, I understand there's some good work under way developing the new Disabilities Action Plan. My questions are more by way of an update. Can the Minister confirm the status of the actions reported on in the reply to our disabilities motion, and whether we're on track to have a new plan in place by March 31st? Mahsi.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in March there was a motion that all Members of the House supported, including Members on this side. We have moved forward, we have begun the development of the plan. We intend to have it done March 31, as originally indicated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that reassurance. Of course, having a plan is one thing; but if the plan is not to suffer the fate of the last one, we'll need deliverables, evaluation, and reporting. Can the Minister commit that no plan will be produced without these features, including a mandatory annual reporting to this Assembly and an evaluation framework?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That is the intention. We intend to have a plan outlining the services and whatnot that are provided today and identifying any gaps in services we need to provide, as well as an opportunity to have mechanisms to evaluate as we move forward.

MS GREEN: To break out one of the multiple questions there, could the Minister commit to annual reporting to the Assembly on the Disabilities Plan once it is delivered?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We'll certainly work with committee. We will keep them updated both with the review and the report, as well as moving forward.

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

MS GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Finally, on this point, I'm wondering whether the Minister will deliver with this plan a costed implementation plan and the assignment of the resources needed to deliver on it. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I knew the money question was coming. The Member has asked pretty much for money on every initiative that we're working on, which I appreciate, and obviously we would love to put money into these initiatives. The problem is, we have an expenditure versus revenue challenge here in the Government of the Northwest Territories. Any money that we put into new initiatives, new programs, is going to cost money, and that money has to come from somewhere.

As I've committed on the other questions the Member has asked, we're going to look carefully at how we're spending our money to make sure that we're getting maximum benefit for the dollars. If we have to re-profile how we're spending the dollars in order to get maximum benefit, we're prepared to do that. Once that's done, if it turns out we need some additional dollars, I'm prepared to work with committee and Members to try to find those dollars from within existing

resources so that we can make appropriate investment, but it's going to take the will of both sides to find areas to reduce in order to invest in new areas. So I'm not going to commit to having a fully costed plan at this point, because I think we have to have a lot more discussion on where our future investments are going to go, but I'm prepared to push for it.