

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 588-18(2): 'LOVE NWT WATER' BOTTLED WATER CAMPAIGN

February 16, 2017

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. I know that, in some of our government offices, even in the executive offices here at the Legislative Assembly, you still find bottled water coolers. At meetings in GNWT-sponsored events, bottled water is still being offered. If we believe in the quality of our municipal water supplies, we need to walk the talk. So in that vein, will the Minister take the lead in Cabinet and have bottled water removed from the executive offices in this building? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Personally, I do not believe in drinking bottled water. I think that we have excellent-quality water in the Northwest Territories. As MACA, my job is to promote community governments. I work with them in building and monitoring their water treatment plants. I am not responsible for all of the government buildings, though, so I will voice my opinions but I cannot make authorization on someone else's department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: If the Minister is a champion for tap water, then can she take the lead in Cabinet and request her Cabinet colleagues to instruct their departments and agencies, the ones that are under their direction, to remove the bottled water coolers and also to direct them that bottled water will no longer be purchased with GNWT money?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I will bring the issue up to Cabinet and bring it to their attention. I can do that.

MS. GREEN: I respect the Minister's answer on this, but I'm asking her to go further. I'm asking her to be a champion. She's already said she believes in the fact that our tap water is some of the best water in the world, so I'm wondering if she can use her authority to get as many GNWT public servants as possible to take the NWT "Love NWT Water" pledge and also to promote the message that bottled water is unnecessary, through bare facts and any other communication means she has at her disposal.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: As I stated before, I don't have the authority to tell all government departments what to do. I do believe in promoting water. I have committed to bringing it forward to Cabinet. Cabinet is sitting here. I will promote that we should be drinking water from a glass.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that endorsement. As the Minister of MACA, of course you have a close relationship with the NWT Association of Communities, and they've had a "drop the bottled water" resolution

on their books for a number of years. So once you've persuaded the GNWT to go bottle-free, will you issue a challenge to your municipal partners to do the same? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I'm just a bit thirsty; I'd like to take a drink of water.

---Laughter

The Speaker, I notice, as well. Yes, as the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, we do work closely with all of the community governments, like we say, in developing their water treatment plants and monitoring them as well. I will put forward to promote the residents in their communities to actually use drinking water from the taps as well, and I would join the honourable MLA Green in challenging all MLAs to go on the Ecology North website and join the campaign.