

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 784-18(2): NATIONAL POVERTY CONSULTATION

May 30, 2017

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for Poverty Reduction. The GNWT has had a poverty reduction strategy for the last four years, and now Ottawa is creating a national strategy. What is the GNWT doing proactively to align these two? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the federal government is moving forward on the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction. I have had the opportunity to meet the federal Minister responsible in cooperation and collaboration with my provincial and territorial counterparts, where we had an opportunity explain some of the realities that we face in our different jurisdictions, talk about some of the actions that we are undertaking, and provide some advice on a broad approach on addressing poverty at a national level.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the federal government has also been doing a number of engagements across Canada, including the Northwest Territories, and we have had our staff attend, sometimes as observers. Where many of the events that the feds were having were invite-only, we have asked that we be there as observers so that we can hear what people are saying and bring that information back to our people who are working on poverty reduction here in the Northwest Territories, but also as an opportunity for me to prep for the next meeting with the federal government where we will be talking about their poverty reduction plan at the next FPT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: As I mentioned in my statement, we need federal help in two priority areas: food and housing. I am wondering how the GNWT is planning to leverage Ottawa's interest in reducing high rates of poverty in the NWT by making changes to programs such as lobbying for changes to Nutrition North and the CMHC declining funding?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The federal government has already indicated that they have already begun flowing some dollars to the Northwest Territories to address housing specifically, some dollars that they have flowed to the IRC. The Minister responsible for Housing is going to a meeting with Minister Duclos, I think next week, where they are going to discuss the exact issues the Member is referring to, housing.

With respect to Nutrition North, Mr. Speaker, we have had different individuals from Cabinet talk to their federal counterparts about our perspectives and trying to make a program that works for residents of the North.

MS. GREEN: If the Minister could share that information, that would be very useful to us. In the meantime, I am wondering what it will take to get these issues introduced into

the Federal Engagement Strategy along with roads.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: These items are in our mandate. These are issues that, as individual Ministers, we bring up at the appropriate time at the appropriate FTPs to make sure that the federal government is aware of our realities, but also the realities of Canadians from other jurisdictions. We do raise those issues on a regular basis, and we are going to continue to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am going to re-ask that question because I did not hear an answer. We have a Federal Engagement Strategy. It talks about infrastructure. Housing is infrastructure. I am wondering if we are going to see some of the issues raised in the poverty consultation in the federal engagement strategy. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal engagement strategy is part of the work that we do as the Government of the Northwest Territories. We engage with stakeholders from all over the country, including Aboriginal governments here in the Northwest Territories and the federal government, on a regular basis. I have a number of mandate items that I am responsible for that did not appear in the Federal Engagement Strategy, but that in no way, shape, or form limits my ability to raise those issues and fight on behalf of the residents of the Northwest Territories, which I and my colleagues are committed to doing and will continue to do, Mr. Speaker.