

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 768-18(2): SENIORS DAY PROGRAM

May 29, 2017

MS. GREEN: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister Responsible for Seniors. As I am sure he is aware, there used to be a day program for seniors in Yellowknife, based at Avens, and the program was a safe place for seniors to socialize. It also gave caregivers a break, as I mentioned in my statement. Since February, there has been nothing. Can the Minister tell us what action he is taking to reinstate this program? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Responsible for Seniors.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Avens let us know on October 2016 that they were intending to suspend operations of the program. They also at that time expressed to us their intent to redesign the adult day program to better meet the needs of clients that it serves and to address any quality and safety concerns that were raised. A working group has been established with representatives from Avens, the department, the territorial authority, and they are conducting a review of the Avens day program, and they have been doing that since late January 2017.

The working group has completed the following components. They are doing a literature review of best practices of adult day programs available throughout the country, they have looked at the historical use and the policies that were in place, and they are doing a review of issues related to safety and quality concerns that were identified. They are currently compiling all of that information and looking forward to bringing it forward to their stakeholders shortly, and a draft report will be circulated once the work is completed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: I am not sure if I'm encouraged or dismayed by the fact that there is now a working group working on another report and another deadline. Maybe the Minister could tell us whether there is money in place to implement a solution when one is identified?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Core funding is provided to Avens to provide the wide range of programs and services that they have. I had an opportunity to meet with the board and the acting executive director about a week and a half ago where we were talking about a future expansion on the site of 48 beds. This topic also came up at the time, and at that time, Avens indicated that they would like to work with the department on an operational review to look at how they're spending their money to make sure that they are getting the dollars that are being allocated, and they are using them to maximum effect. We haven't committed to funding that operational review, but I have asked the department to work closely with Avens to come up with a mechanism and ways we could support them to do that operational review so that they can ensure that the money they are receiving is being spent to a maximum effect.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the answer from the Minister. Is the Minister open to solutions that may look for a new partner rather than Avens to provide this program?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As I have said several times in this House, we are currently doing a continuing care review and a review of homecare services that are planned throughout the Northwest Territories to support residents to age in place as much as possible. We have talked about different models that might be used, whether it is family support or community support. Once we are done that review and we have an actual plan in place, we will be in a better position to figure out what, if new partners are out there, that might be able to assist us in supporting seniors integrate and be part of their community, as well as age in place. I would say the answer is “yes,” but we want to finish that review first.

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

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line here is we’ve got a group of seniors who are isolated because of their lack of socialization, and that’s been the case now going on for six months. We have got various reviews, one of which the continuing care review which is overdue. So, I guess my bottom line question is: when can seniors who need this program, and families who need this program, expect to see a solution? Masi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the report that is being done by Avens now on this very exact topic is expected to be completed by Avens by mid-June 2017. At that point, they will have some ideas how they intend to move forward to support day programming.

The continuing care review, the homecare review that we have been talking about, has already been intended to be available to Members of this House in time for business planning so that we can have an informed discussion, and allocated resources to meet the needs of residents across the Northwest Territories moving forward in subsequent fiscal years.