

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

DISMISSAL OF AURORA COLLEGE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

September 19, 2017

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a few days after our last sitting here the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment dismissed the board of directors at Aurora College and appointed an administrator in their place. The Minister said this move would ensure stability and continuity for the college through the foundational review of its operations. Dismissing the board does not provide for continuity, but for the opposite, an upset in the established order. Worse, much worse, it throws the college's status as an arm's-length authority of government into question.

Mr. Speaker, the last ECE Minister paid for a thorough assessment of the college. The report delivered in March 2013 contained dozens of recommendations to improve the college's performance. Today I'm going to recap just a few of those recommendations that have to do with the relationship between the college's board and the Minister. First, that the Minister and the college's board meet four times a year to review programs and services as well as the budget. Second, that the Minister bring the board and Regular Members together to discuss the college's plans and activities. Third, that he expedite the board of director appointments when there are vacancies. Fourth, that the board employ the president and review his or her performance, and so on. There are 11 recommendations in this section alone and they build on the division of responsibilities outlined in legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the 2013 assessment of the college recommended that the board of directors' role be strengthened, not eliminated. The report writer thought it was important to the college's credibility as a post-secondary institution; important in the competition to attract students to its classrooms and important to academic freedom. The report said the board had an important role to play in setting the strategic direction for the college and for providing accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest test of that relationship between the college and the current Minister occurred this spring, when the Minister announced that the teacher education and social work programs would be suspended. There was a lot of finger pointing about who made that decision and why. It's a decision with many consequences, with the Minister deciding on a foundational review of the college and dismissing the board. He has the whip hand.

Mr. Speaker, residents of the NWT want a credible and competitive post-secondary institution in the NWT. That credibility took a hit when the Minister fired the board without a valid reason, or at least one that he has not yet discussed. I will have questions.