

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 920-18(2): AVENS FUNDING AND OPERATIONAL REVIEW

October 3, 2017

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue my questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. My first question is: how long is he prepared to wait for Avens to get itself into a position for providing a day program? Mahsi.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Avens, as I indicated, has always been a fantastic partner for the provision of services for seniors here in Yellowknife and, really, for residents across the Northwest Territories. They are having some financial difficulties right now. They are trying to ensure that they are spending their money wisely, and we are working closely with Avens right now to make sure that they can continue to move forward to provide core services. We obviously would like them to continue day services, but we really need to understand where they are financially. Once we have a better sense, we'll be in a position to determine whether or not we can help them more in the area of day program or whether we're going to have to look outside, but we do need a little bit of time to work with Avens to see where we are, see where they are, and figure out a path forward. I don't intend to wait like a huge amount of time, but I do out of respect for our far-out partners want to make sure that we are working with them with them as closely as we can in the likelihood that they will be able to provide those services in the future, and if not, we'll find another way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the spring session, the Minister said that Avens had requested an operational review to "look at how they are spending their money to make sure they are getting the dollars being allocated and they are using them to maximum effect." Has the Minister agreed to fund this review? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Avens is an incredibly important partner. We're working closely right now with them to look at the different areas where they're having some financial pressure. One of the things that's come up is the decrease in revenues and how that's affecting the overall operations. We're working closely with Avens to explore these different things, find out what's happening, and find a way to ensure that they're getting the money they need and that the money that they're getting is being spent on the core services that they're so good at providing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister funding an operational review of Avens at this time? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're not funding an operational review at this point in time, but we are working closely with them to do an analysis of their programs or services and the areas that we provide funding. The department of flows funding for operations of Avens Manor long-term care facility for the operation of Avens cottages, the operation of the territorial dementia facility through the NWT Health and Social Services Authority. The three groups are working together to figure out how those dollars are being allocated, if it's enough, if it's not enough, how we can improve services, and we're working closely with our partner. This is a partnership, Mr. Speaker. We're not looking to impose anything on this point. They want to be involved. We want to be involved. We're working together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Avens Manor and Avens dementia cottages together lost almost \$200,000 in the last fiscal year. Granted, that's less than the year before, but it's still not a sustainable position for Avens to be in. I would like the Minister to talk about what he thinks the possible solutions are, especially with respect to revenue. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the things we've talked about in this House before is looking at the rates that are being charged for different long-term care facilities in the Northwest Territories per bed, but with Avens as an example, we have taken some steps already. Last month, September, the department provided Avens with funding to pay the major loan that has been taken to do some site preparation, so we paid off their \$1.1 million loan which is going to help them address some of their costs with respect to paying back that loan but also some of the interest costs on that loan. We are doing things immediately. We are trying to help them address some of their pressures. Some of the things are going to take a little bit more time, but we're working with them to identify where they feel some changes need to be made and how we can work together to make sure that Avens continues to be sustainable in the long-term. Thank you.