

JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
Electronic Medical Records Security and Control
Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Health and Social Services—February 28, 2018

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like to follow up on my colleague's questions by giving a couple of specific examples of where there seem to be technological deficiencies in the current electronic medical record system. One is about patients opting out. Apparently, there is no way for them to opt out of electronic medical records. Is that no longer the case? Can they now opt out if they don't want their records collected digitally? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, individuals who access the healthcare system cannot opt out of utilizing the record systems that we have in place. Our priority, and following up on the recommendations of the Information and Privacy Commissioner about concerns raised by others including individuals of this House, is the ability for a resident to block the ability of their information to be shared with others. We didn't think we initially could do that, but we believe now that we can, so we're working on finding a mechanism whereby a resident, should they choose to, could require us to block their ability for their information to be shared with others; but no, residents won't necessarily be able to say, "No, I don't want any records. I don't want any electronic health records." Our system is going to be an electronic records system. We are moving forward. It will improve quality of care for residents, and there won't be a paper option once we are fully rolled out, but we are looking to find a way to block. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I understand that one of the remedies to offer people who don't want to be part of the electronic medical records is, in fact, to offer them masking where information is concealed. I'm not exactly sure what the right word is, but it's protected, I guess, from certain users in the system; and that the current system is called a legacy system, so it is not that easy to find this fix of masking information on it. Can the Minister elaborate on that point, please?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am pretty sure we are talking about the same thing, using a different word. We are talking about the resident being able to block their record from being seen by certain individuals within this healthcare system, including certain specific information.

The initial system, as designed, didn't really have that available, but we have been working with the developers to see how we can incorporate that in, and we believe there is a mechanism. We are not 100 per cent sure. I may come back and say I was wrong, but at this point we believe that it is something we can do. If we find otherwise, I will certainly let committee know, and we will be looking for alternative solutions. Thank you,

Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister give us an idea of when this potential fix is going to be piloted, and when we might hear a resolution to this issue? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the timing is interesting. We haven't completed a work plan on this yet, but I am scheduled to have a briefing in the next couple of weeks once we have a bit better idea of the magnitude. I will certainly keep Members informed as we move forward as appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just finally on this point: could the Minister commit to proactively informing the committee once he has had the briefing about the status of this issue so that we are also in the loop?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am pretty sure that is what I just said. I am going to keep committee in the loop. Thank you, Mr. Chair.