

JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
Home Care Programs and Caregivers
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 just want to turn now to some questions about the proposed new caregiver program. I know a colleague of mine asked some questions about this the other the day, but I just want to clarify a few things. First, the Minister mentioned that there was vision screening and hearing testing available; and I just wanted to know where and when these services are being offered. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair; and I hate to do this, but I'm not sure I understand. What specific area or what specific section are you making reference to, again? Just for clarity.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm talking about the caregiver program. Is this not in this section? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The paid caregiver program? Okay. So, Mr. Chair, the paid caregivers is one of the action items within the action plan that is put together for the Youth Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan. We do have some federal money that, obviously, doesn't appear in this budget, that we've been able to obtain from the federal government to do some design and some piloting on those paid caregivers. Now, it could one of a number of things: one of them would be family support; one of them could be different people in the community. We are using those federal dollars to develop some different pilots, so that we can go out and test them over the coming years, so that we can make informed decisions on how to invest future money in this area. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, during the business planning process, the committee was informed the options to consider and recommendations for program development will be determined by April 30, 2018. Is that still the schedule? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're still tracking towards that date; that's our hope and our expectation. I accept that weirder things have happened. If we have any difficulties or any challenges that we are not going to hit our targets, I will certainly let committee know.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Minister.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, I understand that some of the bilateral money

has actually been included in here, so it is shown right on this page. I apologize for the misunderstanding.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. I just remind you to let us know when you're done talking so the sound technicians can switch the mics. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you. I'm looking forward to more detail on that. Now, I have a couple of questions on homecare services. We have been told that there is a homecare study that's been undertaken. Could the Minister please update us on the progress of that study? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the RFP for that work has just been released. The intention is for a review to be done of the scope and needs across this territory, in comparison to what we currently have, so that we can have some informed discussions about where future, if any, resources need to be employed to meet homecare needs in the Northwest Territories. So the RFP has just been released. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd be interested to know when this work is supposed to be complete so that we know whether to expect the results to be incorporated to the next business plan. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the work we anticipate is going to take a bit of time. It's going to be done by a private contractor. We really have to dig in right at the base community level. At this point, it's not expected that that work will be done in time for business planning, but it will be available for future decision-making in the Assembly. I will say that we do appreciate that, in the last budget round, we did have some additional money put into this area and we were able hire and create some homecare and home support positions throughout the Northwest Territories in the areas where there was a clear and obvious need. We accept that this work needs to be done, but it won't be done in time for business planning. We're anticipating the work will be done closer to the end of the upcoming fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I know there are going to be people who are disappointed to hear that. The needs for homecare are needs I hear often from my constituents. I have a lot of elderly people in my constituency, and what they ask me is: how have homecare services improved and how will they improve? So what does the Minister suggest I say in response to those questions? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we did have a \$2.5 dollar investment in the last Assembly, which is base funding and has resulted in the creation of a 11.5 -- I think it's 11.5; it might just be 11 -- 11.5 or 11 home support positions

across the Northwest Territories.

We do have a continuing care action plan that includes a number of activities that we are undertaking to support aging in place and help our residents stay in their homes for as long as possible. It isn't just home support workers, but it is pilots like the community caregivers, family care pilots that were working. There are a number of items within the action plan that don't necessarily need new money, but require us to do things different or better.

I would encourage the Member to encourage her constituents to look at the Continuing Care Action Plan, to make sure that their voices continue to be heard, and work with us as we roll out the different initiatives. Not everyone is about homecare workers. There are other things that are in that report. Thank you, Mr. Chair.