

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

ROLE OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL

March 12, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday, I asked some questions of the Minister responsible for the Status of Women about the NWT Status of Women Council. She indicated that the board, under her direction, is moving the council in a new direction that is contrary to its mandate. Following that discussion, I read the Status of Women Council Act. The legislation says the council has an outward-looking focus with the following purposes: to develop public awareness of issues affecting the status of women, to promote a change in attitude so women have equality of opportunity, to encourage discussion on the status of women, to advise the Minister on issues she refers to the Council, to review government policies and legislation, to provide assistance to the Minister in promoting change, and, finally, to assist organizations that promote women's equality.

Mr. Speaker, the Status of Women Council has a current strategic plan. Its goals mirror those in the legislation and provide for a continuation of its current work, such as offering campaign schools, chairing the Coalition Against Family Violence, and organizing Family Awareness Week and the December 6th Vigil. It also provides for them to continue in a public role advocating for women's equality. Even though this plan was developed in the time the Minister has been Minister, there is no mention of undertaking gender-based analysis, although the act provides her with the authority to request this work.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Wise Women Awards have been suspended, we're told, for the time being. The campaign schools are now being offered by the Department of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Until today, the Coalition Against Family Violence featured prominently on the EIA website.

Looking at this range of changes, I'm concerned that the Minister is moving the council from its core, publicly focused mandate and advocacy, and that activities which should remain as arm's length activism are being undertaken under government control.

Mr. Speaker, change is inevitable and change may be good, but change behind closed doors and without public consultation that fundamentally alters the council's presence is unacceptable in a government that provides itself on openness and transparency. I will have questions for the Minister. Mahsi.