

## **MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

### **AURORA COLLEGE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM REVIEW**

**March 14, 2018**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, about a year ago, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment announced that the Social Work Program and the Teacher Education Program offered at Aurora College would be phased out. He said that he made the decision on the basis of low graduation rates from both programs. When I questioned him at the time, he was unsure why the rates were so low or what barriers students faced in completing the programs. The lingering question is whether the Minister was willing to invest any effort into improving the programs before axing them.

Mr. Speaker, Aurora College decided to find answers to these questions themselves by launching a review of the Social Work Program under the leadership of the vice president of education and training. The review is to gauge how to improve student retention and success, to document barriers, recommend the best approach to achieve the objectives of the program, and to assess the quality of the program offered. This is the work that should have been done before the Minister made the decision to phase out the program.

Mr. Speaker, the Social Work Program has been around in different forms since 1982, and it has been reviewed and revamped several times, most recently 20 years ago. Students who finish the current program earn a certificate in social work and have the option to continue on to complete a degree.

Mr. Speaker, as of the year 2000, there were over 100 Social Work Diploma graduates in the NWT, so the number today is obviously much greater. Demand for social workers in the NWT is strong. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment estimates the NWT will need an additional 158 social workers between 2015 and 2030. These are good jobs that pay an average of \$69,000 a year. These are also jobs that are typically filled by women.

Mr. Speaker, social workers are the primary drivers of community development in the places that they work. They are an indispensable support for community wellness. Having northern social workers driver northern community development is obviously a good idea. Training northern residents to be social workers in the North also makes sense, with a record of success stretching back two decades. The program review under way now will help improve the program, but only if the Minister accepts its recommendations. I will have questions. Mahsi.