

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 260-18(3): AURORA COLLEGE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM REVIEW

QUESTION 266-18(3): FUTURE OF THE AURORA COLLEGE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

March 14, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, there is a review of the social work program under way now at Aurora College. The report is due on April 10th. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment: why wasn't this review completed prior to making the decision to phase out the social work program? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we made the decision to phase out the social work program based on low enrolment and low graduation rates. It had a history of low rates over the years. The Aurora College decided to an independent, internal review on its own. I do understand that review is going to be completed in April 2018. We will see where that review and what recommendations that review has in terms of moving forward with the long-term strategic plan for the Aurora College. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: When the Minister gets the report, can the Minister request the report? What does he plan to do with it?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: We can possibly review that report. Because it is an internal document and an internal review that the Aurora College has taken on, my understanding is that because it is an internal document, that is not planned for release to the public. I can follow up with the Aurora College on that, though. Because it is their own internal review, it is something that will not be released to the public. As I mentioned earlier, that can help position what that program is in terms of looking at a long-term strategic plan for Aurora College, after all of our other work around the foundational review is completed as well.

MS. GREEN: What I am asking the Minister is: this college is under administration, so he has a direct role in its governance. When he asks for this report and receives it, what is he going to do with the results? I am not asking him to make it public. He has a terrible record of making things public. I am asking what he is going to do with the report.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: We are excited to see what this internal review is going to recommend at the end. As I mentioned, we do have a diploma program with the social work students that are coming out of the program, and we continue to support them to go and get their degree, whether it is in a southern institution or going over to Yukon College.

What comes out of that review, we are not too sure what it is going to look like, but we

will take it into consideration. When the foundational review is complete and we have that managerial response complete as well, it will help us set a stage for the long-term strategic plan at Aurora College. We will see what recommendations come out of this internal review and how that will impact it as well.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the foundational review and/or the review of the Social Work Program recommends that the program be continued or expanded into a degree program, is the Minister willing to reverse his decision to phase the program out? Thank you.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: We have a lot of things that we are doing right now in post-secondary initiatives. It is a very ambitious agenda. We have the foundational review that is going to help us decide the direction of how Aurora College will be providing its programs and services, but we also have this overarching legislation that is going to help other post-secondary institutions come up, do research, and also possibly look at providing degree-granting programs. We have Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning and College Nordique that will soon be involved in that.

If it looks like we can look at providing a degree-granting program, we will definitely look hard at that, because we want to make sure that we do meet the needs of the labour market here in the Northwest Territories, as well as in all three northern territories and, if possible, other jurisdictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**QUESTION 266-18(3):
FUTURE OF THE AURORA COLLEGE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM**

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Members on this side of the House have received variable answers about the future of the Social Work Program. We have heard both that the program is phased out, and will continue to be phased out; and we've also heard that the results of the foundational review are important to the future of the program. Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment is: which one is it? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The foundational review was a process that we took on as a government, and we are looking at a whole bunch of different areas, and it's not all focused on programs. There's governance. There's operations and administration. There's recruitment, retention, just give a direction of where the college is going. We are going to use that information to help set the long-term strategic plan for Aurora College. That review, the internal review that Aurora College is doing on their own, that will also possibly help us set the direction moving forward. The main focus right now is to get that foundational review complete with the management response, and help us move forward with other supporting documents such as the Skills 4 Success, as well as our labour markets needs assessment and information that we have that data will all help us plan a good direction for Aurora College going to the future.

MS. GREEN: The Minister has given me another and/or answer. He said that the results of the social work program review will possibly figure into what happens to the program there. For the second time, I'm asking: how is the Minister approaching the results of the foundational review and the Social Work Program review with respect to the future of this program? Does it have a future?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: We don't know what's going to be in the internal review of the Social Work Program. We don't know what's in the final report of the foundational review. Once we get those, we are going to develop a management response, as I've mentioned in this House, that's going to work on looking at the recommendations. It's going to give us an opportunity to consider the feasibility of each of the recommendations. It also is going to talk about the analysis of the recommendations, and how we implement them so that all our stakeholders, that all Members of this House can make evidence-based decisions. Until we know what those are, we can't really make a decision here, and everything will be taken into consideration. As I mentioned, the main priority right now is to get this foundational review complete.

MS. GREEN: I'm going to ask the simplest question possible: is the Minister committed to phasing out the Social Work Program?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: With the current budget and the current steps we've taken, we are looking at phasing this current program that is currently at the college out after this year. That's why there are no intakes. What comes out of the foundational review, the direction of the college, we will use that information to make evidence-based decisions, and whether or not they will have the degree granting program, or whether they are going to change direction and do other types of degree granting bachelor programs, but we'll have to get that foundational review complete first.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I was one of the students in this program, I would be very confused about what the future held for me in September at Aurora College. The Minister is trying to have it both ways; that it's phased out, but the foundational review is going to be important to its future. I'll just ask this from another direction. The Minister says he's all about the evidence, which is great. What evidence does the Minister need to reinstate the Social Work Program?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Mr. Speaker, the students who are currently in the Social Work Program were given all the information that they needed in terms of moving forward. They are also getting the supports they need to graduate and to complete their program. Once the whole discussion started about the Social Work Program, they understood it, the staff understood it, and Aurora College senior management understood it. The kind of data they we need to look at is evidence-based decisions that are coming out of this foundational review. We'll look at the recommendations. I said, that's the most important piece of work that needs to be completed first. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.