

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

MINISTERIAL MANDATE PRIORITIES: CAROLINE COCHRANE

May 25, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, I am going to continue providing my version of the mandate letters that should have been giving to the Ministers who took on new portfolios in April. As I said yesterday, the Premier's mandate letters repeat the letters that he provided to prior Ministers. It is as if nothing has happened in the last two years. There is no indication of priorities, just a long list of objectives; so let me try and fix that, this time with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

First, childcare. Childcare is the second largest expense for most families in Yellowknife—and not only in Yellowknife—who have children under four and/or have children who need care after school on the innumerable teacher education days, and during the summer. It is a priority of the 18th Assembly to make childcare both more accessible and more affordable, and the mandate letter acknowledges this point.

The three-year plan negotiated by the previous Minister will provide for professional development for staff and access to childcare in more places, but there isn't one word about affordability. Mr. Speaker, the new Minister needs to reconcile these competing visions of the future of childcare in the NWT to ensure that it is both accessible and affordable.

Second, Aurora College. The college has faced significant uncertainty and disruption for more than a year, following the previous Minister's decision to suspend the Social Work and Teacher Education programs and to dismiss the board. Resolving these issues and others have been put on hold pending the completion of the foundational review. Now that it is complete, I eagerly await the public discussion of the results of the foundational review and the department's vision for the college's future, as well as the future of post-secondary education in the NWT.

Third, income support. I receive many calls from constituents who have issues with service delivery. For example, I have a constituent who has been trying to sort out payment of childcare expenses in order to attend Aurora College. The issue had been unresolved for more than six months. I appreciate that IA staff have rules to follow, but a few take a punitive approach to clients, who have no other choice but to apply for help. Mr. Speaker, there is no reason to further diminish their dignity on purpose.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is large and diverse. I could have chosen another half-dozen issues to talk about today. What I am looking forward to is the Minister's own vision for her new role. Mahsi.