

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

**QUESTION 292-18(3):
MANDATE OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT**

May 25, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. In my statement, I addressed three of my priorities. I would now like to hear what her priorities are for the next 18 months. Mahsi.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to start with saying I found it very interesting that the MLA actually expressed her mandates for education, culture and employment because, in my personal opinion, we need more women in leadership. Nothing against our Premier, I love our Premier, but wouldn't it be wonderful to see a woman Premier that could actually give mandates out to departments? I would like to start with that.

What are my mandates? Of course, I do have to listen to our Premier because I do respect him and I like the man very much. He has actually given me a direction that I have to abide by. I also recognize that I have to abide by the mandate commitments that were made at the beginning of Assembly by all of us, together.

Personally, what I want to do on top of that, recognizing yesterday too that a really wise statement was said, that, when there are too many priorities, you have no priority, I took heed to that last night and I thought about that because that is true. However, I'm a workaholic, and I'm going to move forward.

What I would like to see done besides the mandates from the Premier, the mandates from the House, is I think we need to focus on early childhood development. One of the mandates is getting daycare into the communities. We have problems with drop-outs. We have problems with kids getting into schools, so I would like to see a daycare like a school, that becomes a hub for a community. I have already given direction to look at a pilot with that. If I can, the basic would be putting in a daycare into a community setting. The ideal would be putting a child development centre into a school setting. That's one thing I'm working on.

We need to look at our JK to 12, actually. We have children that are dropping out, so we need to look at what's going on. I'm a big supporter of the Pathways Program. I'm liking that we are going to be strengthening it to actually work with younger children so that we give them the choices and the options when they finish school and we talk to them about the skills they will need and the courses, the curriculum that they will need to be able to succeed in their future.

Post-secondary, definitely, it's been on the table for not only this Assembly, many Assemblies. We need to make sure that, not only our post-secondary, that every education support we have is based on best practices, that we look at making sure that

we do cross-jurisdictional, we have measurable outcomes, we have evaluations in place. That's a priority for me.

Languages, absolutely need to do that. I was honoured to have the language officials here today because we need to strengthen them.

Income security, we need to look at that productive choice things. We need to look at self-employment in small communities and, if I can, move that into a productive choice. Because, in small communities, we have no employment, so let's see if we can look at self-employment options in our protective choices.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the Minister's sincere efforts to answer my questions, and I'm really pleased that there is some overlap in our concerns. I want to look at childcare. I heard her say that she's got a pilot program. That's all well and good, but the mandate calls for not only accessible childcare but affordable childcare, so how is the Minister going to make childcare more affordable?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Before I took the new position actually, the previous Minister was working diligently at that. There were increases to the daycare providers, licensed daycare homes that were provided, a large increase for infants, a smaller increase for the older ages up to three, and then a small but still an increase for the after-school children. The junior kindergarten also is huge for parents. I had my own concerns about it when it was going through, and I'm happy to say that those concerns have been alleviated. Parents are saying it's working. They are saving money. Affordability is being addressed. We gave increases to junior kindergarten. A lot of parents are excited.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to discussing the Aurora College foundational review. I wonder if the Minister can give us a sense of how and when that is going to happen in public.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Aurora College foundational review is one piece of the puzzle. The big thing is our post-secondary education. This is not something that should become political in he-said-she-said and what are you going to do about it. This is our future. This is critical, so I have made a commitment, and I would like to say, if I'm allowed, and I might get slapped on the hand after, but the Chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development is onboard as well.

We need to work as a whole government on this one, so I am not going to be the Minister to stand up and say, "This is what I am doing." I am going to be the Minister that says, "Let's work together to make sure that these are the best post-secondary options for our youth for our future, for our grandparents, and many to come." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I am going to ask that question again because I didn't hear an answer in it. What I asked specifically about the review is if the Minister could give us a sense of how and when we are going to discuss that document.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I apologize. The Member is correct. I should have been a little more blunt. I'm excited about the possibilities.

The document, the Aurora College Foundational Report, will be tabled next week. We are already in the process, so it will become public next week. We are already in the process of working with the Standing Committee on the review and how we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.