

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 323-18(3): WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN SCHOOLS

May 29, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last winter the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs offered two campaign schools for women. During our last session, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women said the move was temporary, but according to the mandate letter provided to her at the end of April, she will "collaborate with the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs and MACA to support delivery of the workshops." On what basis is the Minister making this change? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Status of Women Council actually was doing campaign schools within the communities for a couple of years. I am not sure how long, in all honesty, but we found that they were only working at getting women into the Legislative Assembly. Not that we don't need to get women into the Assembly, but we do need to branch out into other directions; so we looked at their model, and we looked at designing it to meet better needs.

We took it internally in the short term to be able to address the issues, such as getting more women into municipal or Aboriginal governments or school boards, et cetera, because we recognized very quickly that we needed to expand it; that a lot of women, because of various reasons, childcare being one of them, not wanting to travel, leaving their children, was a huge detriment to actually putting their name forward here. In the last campaign that we did, women were talking about a support group. We are looking at that, too, and trying to figure out how we can do it online.

This is not meant to be a long-term solution. I don't have the resources. We don't know if there will be any women elected next time, and it would be inappropriate, then, to do it. I think what we are looking at is just developing a strong campaign school that will reach all of the areas of politics, that will address all of the issues that women want, and when that is done, at that point, then we will look at turning it over to whoever is the best candidate for that, not saying who that may be at this point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: The Status of Women Council has been running the campaign schools since their inception, and the campaign schools have always included women who are interested in elected positions in their communities, not only in the territorial government. I don't understand why this is a driving factor to yank this program away from the Status of Women Council. Can the Minister tell me why they can't be in charge of redeveloping the curriculum?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I am hoping that the Status of Women Council actually will, and I do know that they are trying to do some issues, working with women in getting them into leadership as well.

When I was first elected in this position, my budget wasn't as generous as it is now,

although I am not saying it is that generous, but the Status of Women Council put forward a proposal, and they asked for \$15,000 just to do one workshop. I believe, at that point, I may be wrong, I think my budget was only \$20,000 to do two, which meant I was in a deficit. We had to look at it and see if there was a more cost-effective way.

We are looking at just the development. At that time, like I say, there may have been other women who were interested in going into other leadership roles, other government bodies, but the campaign school, through the Status of Women Council, focused on women in the Legislative Assembly, and we need to branch that out to address Aboriginal governments, municipal governments, and school boards. If the Status of Women Council can do that within the close to half a million dollars that I fund them already, I would be more than happy to allow them to do that work.

MS. GREEN: The Status of Women Council is not being given this opportunity. The campaign schools have been arbitrarily taken into the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, and we have been given various reasons. They are overspending, and they are not capable of reaching women who are not in the territorial government campaigns. In fact, the Minister has had the campaign schools evaluated at least once and possibly twice. I have never seen any evidence of this evaluation. Is she now ready to share it?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The first time we tried to do an evaluation was in the Inuvik campaign school, and that time, it was actually just another woman in another department who was willing to do that work. Sad to say, that woman was an affected employee, and that kind of stopped the work before it was done.

We did have a draft, though, and I do apologize to the MLA from Yellowknife Centre. I thought I had shared that with her in confidence, and if I haven't, then I am more than willing. If she would let me know, then I will share that draft in confidence with her, because it never got finished, but I apologize because I did think I had shared that.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen the evaluation that was completed last year. There was also supposed to be an evaluation of the winter campaign schools. I haven't seen that either.

I want to point the Minister towards a huge and obvious conflict of interest arising from the fact that she is having the public service train the politicians of the future. Mr. Speaker, this is not the job of government. It is the job of an arm's-length agency, and we have one with experience in this area: the Status of Women Council. Can the Minister explain to us why she thinks it is proper for the government to take on this function? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I should clarify that at no point during the campaign schools do we tell people, "This is what you need to do when you become a politician." That isn't the purpose of it. It is actually just to give them the tools to be able to campaign, to give them the tools so that they can actually build the confidence that they need to get in there. Once they get into those governments, then those are their own choices to make on where they want to go with that.

Why is it good to have it internally at this point? Because we have the resources internally. We have the electoral. We have Municipal and Community Affairs that does Aboriginal government training, that does community government training. It was just logical to be able to use those resources.

For the online support that they are asking now, I believe that we did reach out to the Status of Women Council and asked if they would consider doing some of that support. At this point, they are looking at developing their own strategic plan.

I am willing to work with anyone who wants to move this forward, but again, I have very limited resources. It is not about giving out money; it is about getting women into leadership. I have not said that we are not going back. I have not said who is doing it. I am saying that we are still developing it and that we want a solid campaign school. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.