

## ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

### QUESTION 375-18(3): SUPPORT FOR YWCA HOUSING PROGRAM

October 12, 2018

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services in his role as the lead on the Rockhill fire.

The Rockhill apartments belong to the GNWT, and they were leased to the YWCA over the long term. Rent collected from the tenants paid for the housing staff to provide wrap-around services for the families. Now, not only is the building gone, but revenue from the building is gone as well.

My first question is whether the Minister is committed to this housing program continuation? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I go into the answer, I just want to take an opportunity to thank the Member for her statement and, once again, applaud the YWCA, the executive director Lyda Fuller, and the amazing staff for the incredible work they did in responding to this fire, in addition to the residents of Yellowknife, the City of Yellowknife, and the team of GNWT staff that actually stepped up and provided some response as well. I think it was a great response. I think this community should be proud of everything they did.

Mr. Speaker, the Y has been a valuable partner with the GNWT and, on behalf of residents of the Northwest Territories, providing valuable programming. The lead team that we have established to work with the Y has met with the Y on one occasion. We are looking to find ways to support them moving forward.

We are waiting for an ask from the Y to figure out exactly what they are looking to us for in the interim as they rebuild and figure out what our next steps are, but we are working closely with the Y. We believe they are an incredibly value resource to the community, not just Yellowknife, but the entire Northwest Territories, and we are looking forward to continuing our working relationship with them. Thank you.

**MS. GREEN:** Could the Minister give us a sense of the options that are on the table? For example, does the GNWT have access to a building that could be leased to the Y, or is there access to bridge funding to help with the continuation of the housing staff services? What is the range of options the government is willing to consider?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** It is still early days, but it is my understanding that we don't have a building that we could make available. We are certainly reaching out to other potential partners to see what might be available, and we are working with the Y as they are doing some of their outreach as well.

As far as the existing building, we do have to do some remediation on that site. We haven't figured out what rebuild plans, if any, there are for that particular site.

We haven't, like I said, received an ask from the Y on some of their bridging plans or some of their other plans, but we are prepared to continue to work with them closely.

As I have already indicated, our group of deputies who took the lead on our response have reached out and have had some meetings with the Y, and we are looking forward to continuing that relationship as we work with them to find solutions that work for them, for their programming, for the residents of the Northwest Territories.

**MS. GREEN:** I appreciate the Minister's willingness to work with the Y. At the end of the day, the Y is going to have to have revenue to keep this housing program going, and if that revenue can't be generated from a building, then it is going to need to come from a contribution agreement. I am asking the Minister what resources he can bring to the table for the continuation of this program.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** We understand the challenges that the Y is facing. We understand that they have really put themselves out there to backstop the placement of the individuals throughout the Northwest Territories that used to be in their building, and we do understand the financial risk that that puts the Y in and the challenges that it puts on them.

I don't know what financial contribution we will be able to make at this point. We haven't received an ask. We don't know the magnitude. We are hoping and we expect that we will see something so that we can begin to have those very discussions, but, at this point, it would be premature to speculate or to assume what those assets might be.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Y needs to make a specific ask, and my understanding is that the leadership group there is considering that and will be making that known to the Minister.

My final question is about the takeaway, the Minister's takeaway, from the government response. I realize that only just happened, but are they going to do a debrief? Are they going to look at how the response went from their position to strengthen service delivery in the future? Not that there were any problems with the response last week.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, as the lead on our response in Health and Social Services, I have asked the deputy to actually do a debrief with the other departments to make sure that we have learned from this experience. I think it went quite well, but there's always opportunity to learn from experiences, also how we might be able to utilize this experience for other similar incidents that may occur in different communities throughout the Northwest Territories.

It's not just Health and Social Services. MACA has a responsibility to work with communities on emergency responses to different crises that may befall a community. You know, we don't want to see these things. We would hope never to see these things, but it's important for us to be ready. We will certainly learn from this experience. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.