

**MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT ON CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**October 25, 2018**

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wept when I read the Office of the Auditor General's latest findings of the Child and Family Services audit. They concluded for the second time in four years that Child and Family Services is failing children in care; not just failing them, but sometimes putting them at risk of even greater harm than the circumstances that brought them into care in the first place. A child has been assaulted. Another was missing from a treatment program.

For example, health authorities must investigate a report of a child in a potentially unsafe situation within 30 days. The auditor found that a quarter of these investigations weren't completed on time. In a third of investigations, the required interview with parents, the child, and others with information didn't happen. In three-quarters of cases, long-term risks weren't assessed. All of these indicators have increased since the last audit four years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that everyone involved in the lives of children in care wants them to be safe. The problem isn't intention; it's resources. The auditor found that the authorities are overburdened with changes that were not well resourced and which helped produce worse results. It is clear that the focus needs to be on the children themselves rather than on the systems that manage their circumstances.

A key recommendation in this audit is that the Department of Health and Social Services and the health authorities must perform a detailed assessment of the financial and human resources to deliver child and family services. The same recommendation was made four years ago and by Cindy Blackstock in her review of child and family services in 2009, and by the Child Welfare League of Canada 18 years ago. Until this work is done, we won't know why Yellowknife has twice as many child-protection workers as the Tlicho Community Services Agency when the size of their caseload is similar. The department's response to most of the recent recommendations focuses on things like team design and streamlining business processes. My fear is that children will again be pushed further to the margins while the department prioritizes its systems and ensures its liability is covered.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Social Services was a member of the standing committee that hired Ms. Blackstock, and he has been the Health Minister for seven years. Mr. Speaker, that means the Minister has heard this call to identify the resources needed to provide these services at least three times, and the problems not only persist, they are getting worse. The children who needed his help nine years ago are now adults or well on their way. It's worth remembering that these children, all children, have but one childhood. Our priority must be to help children not only survive it, but to thrive in safe and supportive environments. Mahsi.