

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

**QUESTION 507-18(3):
BEARNET COMMUNICATION EMAIL REGARDING STRIKE NOTICE
February 6, 2019**

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, his deputy minister sent an email to all GNWT staff that many interpreted as encouraging people to cross the picket line. Given the outrage this message has provoked among union members, will the Minister walk this statement back so that options to cross the picket line are excluded? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Finance.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I will not. What we were doing was providing information out there. If you read the statement very carefully, it does not encourage people to cross the picket line. It encourages them to speak to their union representative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: I don't agree with the Minister's interpretation. I felt the information was gratuitous and fanned the flames. Did the Minister, in fact, consider the impact of having workers cross the picket line in workplaces and communities when he authorized the message?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The goal of the communique was to provide employees with information in response to a number of inquiries we had as to what some of their options might be. We thought we would provide them with the best information possible, including that. I have the ability to read, and what I read was that it encourages people to talk to their union representative.

MS. GREEN: Is the government prepared to enter into binding arbitration if mediation fails?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Let's not presuppose that mediation is going to fail. The ultimate goal at the end of the day is to reach an agreement during mediation. Failing that, we will have a discussion at that time, but let's not presuppose the outcome of mediation before it even happens.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister is no doubt aware, the temperature on this dispute has gone up very considerably in the last 24 hours because of actions on both sides. What is his plan to reduce the temperature around this labour dispute at this time? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: My plan is to appeal to people's good judgement and treat both sides with respect, and I think that will go a long way. We talk about respect in the Northwest Territories all the time, and I think that this is one of those situations where we show due respect on both sides of the table, and we would hope that that would bring the temperature down. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.