

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

**QUESTION 529-18(3): FUNDING FOR HOMECARE SERVICES
February 7, 2019**

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my colleague's questions, I have a general question about homecare funding as represented in yesterday's budget. The budget seems to indicate a significant decrease, of more than a million dollars, in homecare spending, and I am wondering if the Minister can tell us how that relates to the answers he just gave to my colleague. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier in this Assembly, we had a large amount of money put into homecare. We used those monies to create a number of positions. There was more money allocated than the positions that we had identified, and we had been trying to use those monies for different programs. Unfortunately, there was \$600,000 that was lapsing. Recognizing that we were going to be lapsing the \$600,000 in this coming fiscal year, we had to make a decision on where we could get best bang for buck on those dollars, and it was decided to put them in, for this fiscal year, to Child and Family Services, which is an area where we are experiencing some significant difficulties.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, that is not the only pot of money that we have. We have been working very closely with the federal government, and we are anticipating making a number of significant announcements over the next couple of weeks on areas where we are going to be investing in homecare with federal support, which will offset some of those dollars that we are now focusing into Child and Family Services.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's answer. What I heard him say is that there was more money than there were positions filled. If I have that right, could he tell us how specifically he is going to strengthen recruitment for homecare?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I am not sure that's exactly what I said. We created a large number of positions as a result of that budget, but not all of those resources were specifically for positions. When it comes to recruitment, we filled most of the positions, but, in some of our communities, we have gone out time and time again and we haven't had any success. I have had conversations with a couple of the MLAs about the challenges that we are facing in the regions, and we will be reaching out to leadership here shortly to find out if there is any opportunity to work with them to identify people in the communities who can do these home support worker positions so that we can provide training on the job to fill those.

MS. GREEN: Could the Minister tell us what the requirements or qualifications are to work in homecare?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It really depends on the job. Homecare nurses must be registered nurses. We have also got homecare LPNs. They must be LPNs. When it comes to home support workers, normally we need somebody who has got some skills

in areas related to resident care or other things. There is some training that is available in the Northwest Territories, but, personally we believe that's a job where we can train on the job. We have the regional recruitment program that we are certainly willing to use to train people to do those jobs on the job, without necessarily coming in with the skill set prior.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question is: where the department has been unable to or the authority has been unable to recruit the appropriate homecare supports, then how is homecare being delivered, or is it not being delivered at all?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Not everybody in every community, obviously, needs homecare. It's based on a referral system. If we do not have a home support worker in the community who can do that, there are other opportunities to have individuals like CHRs provide the support that they can and other nurses provide the support they can and other professionals that happen to be in the communities. It's not ideal. We have created these positions to provide a certain level of support. In some cases, they may not be receiving the full scope that has been requested under their medical direction, but we are trying to fill these positions, and we will continue to do so until we fill them.