

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

**QUESTION 545-18(3):
ANTI-POVERTY ROUNDTABLE AND ACTION PLAN**

February 11, 2019

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As I mentioned in my statement, my hope and expectation is that the next Anti-Poverty Action Plan will include well-defined goals for which there is required funding for implementation, along with robust evaluation. Can the Minister tell me whether this is a realistic expectation? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, we heard clearly from the participants of the roundtable and also from individuals who submitted a number of written submissions afterwards, often encouraged by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre. There is a lot of input. A lot of suggestions have come in. We are trying to incorporate those. We can't accept them all just on face value. Some of them, we need to do a little bit more digging to see if they can be incorporated.

Our plan right now, Mr. Speaker, is to finalize the drafting here in the next couple of weeks and take it through Cabinet to get their endorsement to send it to committee. Committee, I hope that we have some good to-and-fro on that document to make sure that we are getting it as strong as can be, incorporating the types of discussions that the Member has identified here, so that we can release the document in the spring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the detail that the Minister provided in his answer.

I want to go into the specifics a little bit. Food security was a high-profile issue at the most recent anti-poverty roundtable. In addition to funding food banks and soup kitchens, does the Minister have a plan to develop a long-term systemic solution to help the one in three children who experience hunger in the NWT?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I know that the Member is aware of this, because she has been involved in this file for a very long time, and I appreciate the work that she has brought to this particular issue, but this isn't just a Health and Social Services issue; this is a territorial issue. This is the responsibility of all people in the Northwest Territories, and there are multiple partners on that.

ITI is doing work around community gardens. Education, Culture and Employment is doing work around food programs for school-aged children. There is money through the anti-poverty fund. We are trying to make as much progress in this area as we can. The money might flow from different initiatives, but it is all addressing poverty here in the Northwest Territories.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to go at that question in a different way. Food security is just the example, but the real point I am trying to get to is funding short-term

solutions and funding long-term solutions and whether there is any intention by the government to look at a set of long-term solutions to issues like food security, which would provide solutions that don't have to be constantly updated but would be in place for all residents of the GNWT over the long term.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to food security, I think ITI is doing an awful lot of work for getting community gardens and other mechanisms in our communities. I think the commercial fish work that we are doing goes a long way to food security. One of the things that Health and Social Services do, and it is building upon the work that is being done by ITI, is we are modifying legislation to allow people to sell produce that they are growing in their own gardens. The next step will be finding ways through regulation policy to allow people to sell more complicated food like meats and other things. These are things that will last for extended periods of time, but we have to do it right. We have to make sure that we are doing it, to ensure that people are eating safe foods if it is being sold. Those are the types of things. Those aren't the only things. This is certainly an area that we need to keep having more and more discussion as better technology and more information comes to the table, but we are trying to make improvements in this area. We will be working with our partners, including federal governments, territorial governments, communities, and NGOs.

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

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Finally, my last question is: at the workshop, the Minister talked about securing business and charitable partners to leverage additional funding for anti-poverty initiatives; I am wondering if the Minister can tell us what progress he has made and what the plan is for that?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, we have reached out, but at this point in time we haven't managed to increase a level of funding through partners, but you don't stop after asking once. You ask multiple times. We will keep pushing some of these organizations to see if they are willing to step up to the plate. Some may, some may not, but we will keep trying. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.