

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 547-18(3): SEXUAL ABUSE IN AMATEUR SPORT

February 12, 2019

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs responsible for amateur sport. CBC's revelations this week about sexual abuse in amateur sport is a call to prevention. One clear and obvious precaution is a requirement for criminal record name checks for persons with access to amateur sports players. Can the Minister tell us whether there is a requirement for criminal records name checks, not just for coaches, but for all persons with care and oversight responsibility for young athletes? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I just want to thank the Member for bringing this very serious and disturbing issue to Members of the House, as well as all our residents across the Northwest Territories. I can assure the Member that the department and the organizations that we do work with do support the Northwest Territories athletes and that we take the responsibility related to the protection of our youth and those who are participating, whether it's in sport, recreation, or even in the arts, very seriously.

Our current requirements include the necessity for coaches to submit regular criminal records and vulnerable sector checks, certification by coaches in various training programs including coaching ethics and education sessions, as well as education for parents and athletes through international or territorial sport organizations on preventing, identifying, and dealing with situations that may be harmful to our athletes and our youth.

It was a very informative article, and in the article it does say questions that parents and caregivers should be asking. I encourage all parents and caregivers who watch over youth and their children who participate in recreation and sport to look at the article and ask those questions when they're putting their youth and some of our most vulnerable people into these programs.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the information from the Minister. If the Minister will send me an email with that link in it, I'll certainly make it known. Parental responsibility is obviously part of the equation here. Further, does the Minister require a list be kept by Sports North of people convicted of abuse in connection with young athletes, and is there a way for the public, meaning primarily parents and caregivers, to access it?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned, all of our partners that we work with do take their responsibilities very seriously when working with our youth and our athletes. That's something I'll have to take a look into in terms of the policy for having that information shared with parents and the general public, as it is in a legal term, but it's something that we need to look at. Next week or later this week I will be meeting with my federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts in Red Deer prior to the Canada Summer Games,

and we will be discussing it. One of the agenda items, actually, is prevention of harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport, with this article being released and with the support of Minister Duncan and some of the work that she has done vocally through the media. I will be bringing this up as something that we need to discuss and look at creating some type of policy and what we can do at the national level.

The article was very hard to read, and the stats that the Member did share that are shown in the article are very tough to read, and we want to make sure that we address them. I will assure Members of this House and our parents and our residents that I will be bringing this up at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting and seeing how we can have an impact on this, address it, and ensure that our youth and our athletes are safe.

MS. GREEN: Again, I appreciate the Minister's response. I understand that this is a very sensitive topic for all of us. One of the things that the federal government has done is tied funding to sports to policies and prevention around sexual abuse of amateur athletes. Is there any equivalent in place for territorial funding of sports organizations?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: One of the opportunities I will have this week is to bring up such concerns as that with our federal government to look and see how we can access more funding for education, creating awareness, a promotional campaign, and I think that all jurisdictions will probably have the same type of focus when we have the meeting on that agenda item. We are also going through a territorial sports strategy and working with our partners, as well as our territorial sport organizations. I think this is the time to have those discussions and I encourage anyone who might be going through something like this. It is a very sensitive topic, but I do encourage anyone who might be going through this experience to speak up. I really thank the Member for bringing this to the attention of the House, but also I am sure all of our sport organizations, our partners, our TSOs, and our schools are listening as we are having this discussion right now.

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

MS. GREEN: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it sounds as if the CBC series was timed very well in terms of having this issue already on the radar of various government officials, such as the Minister. My final question is: if there is a young person in a small community who feels victimized by somebody who is a sports official or coach in their lives, where would that youth go now, today, to report that abuse, and what would the follow-up to a complaint like that be? Does the Minister have that information? Mahsi.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I would encourage the child, as I mentioned, to speak to somebody who they trust, who they can speak up to, whether it is a teacher, a parent, a close friend, or perhaps somebody of adult supervision in their lives, whether it is a care provider, but I encourage them to speak up, as I mentioned in the previous response. Anybody who is going through this doesn't deserve it, any type of abuse. I will be bringing it up at the national sports meeting that I will have later this week and see how we can address that, look at getting funding, and how we can create more awareness and prevention education within the school system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.