

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

**QUESTION 599-18(3): WISE WOMEN AWARDS**

**February 22, 2019**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. International Women's Day will soon be upon us, and traditionally, it has been the time that the Status of Women Council announces the annual winners of the Wise Women Awards. There weren't any awards last year, and I haven't seen a call for nominations this year. I am wondering if the Minister could tell us what's up with the Wise Women Awards. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wise Women Awards is a very important event. It recognizes the contributions that women have made in society. We did talk about it. I met with Violet Camsell-Blondin, actually, on January 15<sup>th</sup> to talk about many things. That was one of them.

We had talked about different things. They were talking about maybe changing the time to coincide with October, with Women's History Month. That is probably why you haven't seen anything in the paper now. My women's special advisor has been working with them to look at alternative fundings. We have applied to a few of the mines. We have got a commitment from one of the mines. One of the other mines has asked for more clarification on it, so we are in the process of doing that for them. They can also access some of the money through the Women's Initiatives Grant.

The other thing that I should say that they are talking about is not doing it in the capital, because it limits us. It is more expensive, and it limits the amount of people. One thing that I have learned in the last three years is how community-focused people are. You have an event. It doesn't matter what it is; they come out in hordes. They come. There are big meals. There are gatherings. When we only do it in Yellowknife, those people are limited. Status of Women was looking at actually changing format a bit and having those women recognized in their home communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** I have some follow-up questions. I just want to be clear that it is up to the Status of Women Council to have independent fundraising for these awards. Do I understand that correctly?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I take it I wasn't clear enough. The Status of Women Council will be able to access funds through the Women's Initiatives Grant, which is from the GNWT, Government of the Northwest Territories. The special advisor who works with my position, with me, is working with the Status of Women to assist them to write proposals to the mines to access additional funding for that.

**MS. GREEN:** Could the Minister tell us, of the awards that she is familiar with through her ministries in the last three years, which other awards the organizations are fundraising for?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I am a little bit confused about the question, but I will try my best to answer. Many organizations apply for the Women's Initiatives Grant. We only have \$50,000. We try to allocate them, usually, around \$5,000 each, sometimes more, depending on the number of proposals and the needed requests. Many of those organizations, Mr. Speaker, access additional funding for their projects. It is not unusual for many people to look for lots of opportunities for funding, and I encourage that. People need to look for funding as many ways as they can.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This government gives out a tremendous number of awards. We recognize people who speak Indigenous languages. We recognize volunteers. We recognize firefighters. We recognize people with the Premier's Awards. As far as I know, no one is responsible for fundraising money for those awards. They are part of the department's budget. I am wondering why the Status of Women is being treated differently in being told that they need to write proposals to corporate funders in order to host the Wise Women Awards. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** When I first assumed this position a few years ago, actually, I had made the wrong assumption, I guess, that the Status of Women actually worked in closer partnership with myself as the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. It was very clear from standing committee that they wanted us to have a hands-off approach and let the Status of Women be their own entity.

I heard that loud and clear, so I have been walking on very thin ice with them in trying to be supportive versus directive. They are not a government department. They are an independent agency, so, therefore, there would be differences. There are other agencies that I am sure provide other events that aren't 100 percent sponsored by the GNWT, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.