

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

**QUESTION 665-18(3): BILL C-92 IMPACT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

**March 8, 2019**

**MS. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The federal government has introduced Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Children, Youth, and Families. The purpose of the act is to acknowledge that Indigenous governments have the right to create their own laws to regulate child and family services. I realize this legislation was introduced only a week ago. Can the Minister tell us how Bill C-92 will apply in the NWT, if at all? Thank you.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department has had the legislation for about a week, and we have been going through and trying to determine how it will impact here in the Northwest Territories. I think there is still more work that needs to be done on that analysis. However, through our early analysis, it is not expected that the proposed legislation will significantly impact how CFS is currently delivered here in the Northwest Territories. It is important to note that the key principles in their legislation remain generally consistent with the principles set out in our NWT Child and Family Services Act, as well as Building Stronger Families.

As the Member said, the purpose of the proposed legislation is to affirm the rights and jurisdictions of Indigenous peoples in relation to child and family services and sets out some principles applicable at a national level to the provision of child and family services to Indigenous children. I would like to note that the Government of the Northwest Territories, both before this legislation and after this legislation passes in Ottawa, has been and will continue to be in support of Indigenous governments exercising jurisdiction in the area of child and family services when they choose. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** It seems that the reserves in the Northwest Territories and the Tlicho Community Services Agency may be the most likely entities to want to implement this bill. Does the government plan to provide any particular help to these organizations or Indigenous governments in order to put themselves into a position to implement this act if passed?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Currently, there are two different Indigenous governments that actually have the power and the authority to draw down child and family services today. We are working with all of our Indigenous partners. If these Indigenous governments choose to draw down those authorities now, we will certainly work with them in cooperation with Canada to ensure that those services are drawn down and devolved in a way that gives them the ability to provide high-quality services for all their residents.

**MS. GREEN:** I wonder what this legislation might do to federal transfers for health to the NWT. Would transfers to specific Indigenous governments go via the GNWT, or would

they go directly to the Indigenous governments?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Honestly, we can't answer that question yet. One of the issues that has been raised at the national level about this legislation is that there are no dollars tied to it. If dollars come in phase 2, and I believe that is where the federal government said money might come, we would be happy to work with them, with our Indigenous partners. The bottom line is we all want the same thing, which is fewer Indigenous children in care. We want to build and support stronger families. I think we are all trying to do the same thing. We are prepared to work together.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the responses from the Minister. It is my understanding that the bill allows Indigenous governments to negotiate coordination agreements with provincial and territorial governments as well as Ottawa. Is this an approach GNWT will work with if the bill becomes law? Mahsi.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Our current legislation requires us to work with the Indigenous governments and Indigenous communities here in the Northwest Territories if a child from their community were facing apprehension. We are committed to continuing to do that. If the Indigenous governments choose to draw down these responsibilities, of course, we want to work with them and with Ottawa to make sure that those responsibilities are transferred effectively.

At the end of the day, we want the same thing. We want a system that supports families to stay together where it is appropriate. Where children have to be apprehended, we want to make sure that it is done in such a way as to maintain connections with culture, community, and residents. We all want the same thing. We are prepared to work together with all of our partners to make it a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.