

## **Question 1-19(2): Aurora College Change in Leadership**

February 5<sup>th</sup> 2020

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier since it was she who released the announcement yesterday that the president of Aurora College is no longer. As the Premier is well aware from her history as the Minister, Aurora College has been through frequent leadership changes in the last three years. Now, the president the government chose just a year ago has been shown the door. My question is: why? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to take a moment to recognize Dr. Weegar for the service he provided to the Northwest Territories. It was great to have him on board. I am not going to stand here and talk about personnel issues. I think that is inappropriate in the House. What I can say, though, is that we are on track, that we are doing the best that we can to make sure that our polytechnic goes forward and becomes an accredited polytechnic university. Sometimes, you make leadership changes that we do not have notice of. To jump to say that we are showing the door might not be the terms that I would use. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Premier for that response. I believe that the public is owed an explanation of why this man is no longer working for the government after the extensive efforts that were made to recruit him to this job in the first place, so I invite the Premier to consider a more fulsome response. My second question is about the new college president who has been appointed from within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Other than his longstanding employment with the government, what are his qualifications for this job?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Bevin has a long history of being suitable for this position. He has done the leadership skills. He is in the position currently. He was responsible for leading the development and the implementation of our Skills 4 Success initiative. He has done practical linking of training and job opportunities, a key part of the vision for the polytech, and he actually took part in some of the polytechnic review. So, yes, he is very qualified for the position and, again, this is more of an HR issue, so I'll stop at that.

MS. GREEN: I thank the Premier for that response. It's a surprise to me, given his qualifications as the Premier enunciated them, that he wasn't appointed in the first place. Can the Premier tell us whether this appointment is temporary while a more thorough search takes place for somebody with direct post-secondary leadership qualifications?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I don't know, actually, why he never applied. I do know that, when Dr. Weegar was hired, we did go out and -- the terminology is called "head hunter"; I'm not sure what the proper terminology is. So we sought someone from outside. I don't know if Mr. Bevin actually applied in

that process. This is the first I knew about it. This position is going to be staying. We have made a commitment that, within the next six years, the Aurora College, the polytechnic university, will be independent. At that point, we will be putting it out to competition for a president. Over this next year, though, we are trying to ascertain if this position actually needs to be one position or two positions. At this point, it's the start of a new government. We are looking at that. We are deciding if this is actually the best strategy that we're using going forward, and within the next six months to a year we will have made a decision on whether we'll be splitting those positions or remaining as one.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response from the Premier. It anticipates my next question. There have been reports that have documented the issues of ECE's interference with the college, and I wonder, now that there is a former ADM of ECE as president, how those two functions are going to be kept separate. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: There is a clear separation. As the associate deputy minister for post-secondary education, he reports to the Minister of Education directly. I am in charge of his performance, of course; and, as the president, he actually reports to the board of governors. There is also an administrator there and, of course, we have vice presidents there to assist him within that position. The other thing I should point out, and that was just spoken in the last sitting, is that the current Minister of Education has just appointed his Academic Advisory Council, which is advisory people from across the nation who specialize in polytechnic university. So his position will be over-supported within that framework that we have going. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.