

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

**QUESTION 191-19(2): GLADUE REPORTS**

**March 12, 2020**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice. As I said in my statement, the Yukon government is piloting a program to train Indigenous people to write Gladue reports. The purpose of the report is to inform the court of the background and circumstances of an Indigenous offender so that courts have consistent information when considering sentencing. My question is: has the Minister given any thought to funding a report-writing program like the one being piloted in the Yukon? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Minister of Justice.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have given thought, and I have personally given thought, to whether or not we can fund that. As the Member is aware, Gladue report-writing's purpose is to provide better information to the courts so that they can make better decisions in a way that respect somebody's Indigenous heritage but also respects, sometimes, the systemic issues that impact an individual when they come before the courts. The ultimate purpose of that, Mr. Speaker, is to reduce the over-incarceration of Indigenous people in Canadian prisons, particularly in Northwest Territories prisons. Ultimately, while having given thought to whether or not this is a direction we want to go, at this time, our focus is on other ways of actually achieving that same goal and putting those resources towards achieving that same goal in other ways. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** That was an intriguing answer. Can the Minister tell us what other equivalent ways she is looking at reducing Indigenous representation in the justice system?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** The Department of Justice will be doing some strategic planning when session is over. During the course of that, one of the priorities that we have that has been a personal priority for me is to achieve some movement in terms of the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prisons. There are ways of doing that by increasing our community engagement; by increasing community justice programming; by looking to diversion programs; by truly avoiding people going into the jail system in the first place; by, for example, reducing the amount of people who are in remand. There are a number of levers that we can pull, and those are all going to be levers that we are looking to to see what changes we can make both quickly but also systemically over time.

**MS. GREEN:** Any and all attempts to reduce Indigenous representation in the justice system and in corrections, I think, are welcome. I see the potential in Gladue reports, and I hope that the Minister will include this in her strategic planning session. Could I have that assurance, please?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** More information doesn't hurt. More information is better, and certainly, we do need to ensure that the reasons that bring people before courts are fully understood. I have personally seen the difference that that can make in the course of a court proceeding. Yes, I will certainly assure that consideration is given to whether or not full Gladue reports can or should be included and whether resources should be directed in that vein.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Final supplementary, Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that. One of the intriguing ideas about the Yukon example is that it is a collaboration between the Council of Yukon First Nations, Legal Aid, and the territorial government. I encourage the Minister to have some research done into that program to see how it may be beneficial there. Is she able to make that commitment? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I had the opportunity to meet with my colleagues from the Yukon at the First Ministers' Meeting that was held not long ago, and we had a very good conversation about a lot of initiatives that are happening in the Yukon right now. Indeed, some of our alternative courts were modelled after systems back in the Yukon. I can certainly assure the Member that those exact conversations with that jurisdiction will continue and that we will both continue to share best practices. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.