

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 713-18(2):MANDATE COMMITMENTS TO INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

March 8, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. I would like to thank her for her very thorough Minister's statement earlier today. I've had to rejig my questions a bit. The 2016-2017 Annual Report on Implementation of the Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories was tabled in house, I think, last week. In reporting on government accomplishments, there's no mention of Section 5 items that deal with increasing the number of women running for office. I'm just wondering if the Minister can explain whether this was -- or, sorry, the words "woman" or "women" don't appear anywhere in this section of the mandate report. Can the Minister help explain what happened with the mandate report? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason that the accomplishments that we've done with addressing with getting more women into politics wasn't in the mandate speech was because this Cabinet recognized that today is International Women's Day. We decided that it was important enough that we wanted to denote a whole Minister's speech to this issue. It was decided to not put it in there and actually provide a whole Minister's speech to address it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you to the Minister. It was kind of an interesting explanation. I would encourage you to report on that good work, and you did, but it should be in the report, too, to tell the public that we're continuing to do that. I do recognize the efforts of the Minister and my colleague from Yellowknife Centre in conducting that work.

One of the three specific activities as stated in the mandate is as follows: we will support a communications campaign to increase the participation of women in politics. Can the Minister give specifics on when that campaign will be launched, and mindful that we're only two years away from the next election and anyone planning to run should be starting their work now?

HON. COCHRANE: The communication campaign, we're just in the middle of developing it now. The reason that we're putting a little bit of still working on it is because we recognize that, when we are doing the campaign schools, that we are only addressing actually to get women into the Legislative Assembly. We are now looking at, once we do a workshop in Inuvik, we will be revising our whole campaign school so that we can address more women so that they can actually run not only for the Legislative Assembly but for Aboriginal governments, for municipal governments, hamlets, etc. Once we've decided our format and how we're going to address that, then we will be rolling out a full communication plan to address all of the issues.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks again to the Minister. That's very helpful to hear that. I

appreciate her efforts. Part of the work of Elections NWT is to promote and increase participation in the electoral process including participation of women. How is our government collaborating with Elections NWT or even other organizations to increase the number of women running for elected office?

HON. COCHRANE: Actually, we do collaborate quite closely. We do have our electoral officer attend the campaign schools with us. We will have the Department of Justice actually attending with us also to give us some feedback on where we need to move more and in what direction. We are working quite closely with the Status of Women on this issue. We are trying to be as inclusive as possible with the whole direction of getting more women in leadership in politics.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. It's all good news today from the Minister. I appreciate her work on this. I'm just wondering if -- and I'm sorry, I didn't give her a heads up on this one -- she's been very thorough in answering everything else. What sort of specific funding, though, have we identified in the 2017-18 budget for these efforts as part of our mandate? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the first campaign school, we gave \$15,000 to the Status of Women, which was what they asked for, to do their campaign school in Hay River. We have just given \$25,000 to the Status of Women to do the campaign school in Inuvik. We haven't gotten a financial figure out of the communications campaign yet. Once we finish that, then we will know what we are looking at, and we are planning, as stated in my Minister's statement, that we will be doing more campaign schools throughout, right until the next election. At that time, we will be allocating more monies to that.